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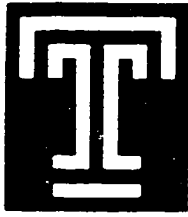
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TEMPLE UNIVERSITY GRADUATE BOARD

Title of Dissertation: **HAMKA'S TAFSĪR AL-AZHAR: QUR'ANIC EXEGESIS
AS A MIRROR OF SOCIAL CHANGE**

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A Dissertation
Submitted to
the Temple University Graduate Board

in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

by
Wan Sabri Wan Yusof

August, 1997

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ABSTRACT

HAMKA'S *TAFSĪR AL-AZHAR*: QUR'ANIC EXEGESIS
AS A MIRROR OF SOCIAL CHANGE

Wan Sabri Wan Yusof

Doctor of Philosophy

Temple University, 1997

Major Advisor: Prof. Dr. Mahmoud M. Ayoub

This dissertation attempts to explain interconnections between *Tafsīr al-Azhar* and intellectual, social, political, and cultural phenomena in twentieth century Indonesia. *Tafsīr al-Azhar* is a modern Qur'anic exegesis in Indonesia which takes into account indigenous experience to explain verses of the Qur'ān. Hamka, who was a reformer, also interpreted verses of the Qur'ān in the context of his reform ideas in which *bid'ah* and superstition were the main targets.

This study also finds that antagonistic ideologies such as Islam, nationalism, colonialism, and Communism filled the pages of *Tafsīr al-Azhar*. This is because Qur'anic exegesis, just as it has been in earlier Islamic history, was used by the writer to express personal inclination and dogma. Hamka, who was constructed by his Islamic habitus, expressed his personal view in his interpretation which was informed by

his antagonistic experiences with Christianity and Communism. The national unity of Indonesia was another Hamka's concerns that found its way into the pages of *Tafsīr al-Azhar*.

In short, *Tafsīr al-Azhar* was a mirror of social change: pre-independence and post independence Indonesia. All such issues were used to contextualize the meanings of verses of the Qur'ān so that they were understood and related better to the Malay-Indonesian people who were lacking knowledge of the Arabic language. In other words Hamka was able to *membumikan* (indigenize) the meaning of the Qur'ān to fit the Indonesian experience.

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To my parents who taught me to persevere in my
search for the truth; my family and
children whose love and affection
keep me moving.

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TRANSLITERATION TABLE

Arabic Letters	Transliteration	Diacritical Signs
	'	
	b	Short Vowels:
	t	_____ a
	th	_____ u
	j	_____ i
	h	
	kh	Long Vowels:
	d	_____ ā
	dh	_____ ū
	r	_____ ī
	z	
	s	Diphthongs:
	sh	_____ uww
	ṣ	_____ aww
	ḍ	_____ aw
	ṭ	_____ ayy
	ẓ	_____ iyy
	'	_____ ay
	gh	
	f	

q

k

l

m

n

w

h

y

ah

(article)

al (even before the anteropalatals)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Introductory Remarks

Since the arrival of Islam in the thirteenth century in the Malay-Indonesian world,¹ the tradition of Islam there has been the subject of historical², biographical³, sociological, anthropological⁴, and political⁵ studies. Among these, Qur'anic exegesis is one of the most important and enduring areas of study for Malay scholars, and a considerable amount of effort has been invested in it.

As early as the thirteenth century the Malay-Indonesian Muslims came into contact with the Qur'ān, though not in the form of exegetical activities, but rather most likely in the form of recitation, as the Qur'ān is recited in daily prayers and religious rituals among the Muslims. However, some manuscripts of Qur'anic commentaries dating to the sixteenth century have been found.⁶ Therefore, judging by the extant record at least, Qur'anic commentary did not begin until the sixteenth century. There are records, however, of partial translations of verses of the Qur'ān and Qur'anic quotations which can be found in texts relating to other areas of Islamic religious sciences or surfacing in discussions pertaining to matters of religion.⁷

As Islam in the Malay-Indonesian world came from the Islamic mainland via Gujerat, India, such dependence on the science of *tafsīr* is not unexpected. As it developed, such dependency, especially the methodology and even the interpretations themselves, gradually changed. The tradition of Qur'anic studies and *tafsīr* which had begun in the thirteenth century underwent a significant development, displaying new and original contributions in this field. From the thirteenth to the sixteenth century there were no significant changes in dealing with the Qur'ān. It is difficult to determine the nature and extent of interaction with the Qur'ān for these centuries. This is due to the fact that historical evidence is lacking for that period of time. This we may safely attribute to, as A.H. Johns puts it, "the dominance of oral tradition."⁸ Consequently, in the process of Qur'anic learning the teacher might read the text of the Qur'ān and translate to the students only verbally. There were no written translations of the Qur'ān except for partial translations used to explain issues in mysticism, theology, jurisprudence, and other Islamic sciences. These partial translations can be found in the work of Hamzah Fansuri (c. 1550-1600).

In the seventeenth century, a full-fledged Qur'anic exegetical work was written by a Malay-Indonesian scholar, 'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Sinkilī (1615-1693).⁹ This new development was emulated by later Malay-Indonesian scholars, even though

their writings were often imitations, or mere translations, of the classical Arabic *tafsīrs*.¹⁰ 'Abd al-Ra'ūf's *tafsīr* was the first Qur'anic commentary to be written in the Malay-Indonesian language.

In the eighteenth century, to the extent of our knowledge, there was no new *tafsīr* written by the Malay-Indonesian scholars. However, during this period Qur'anic activities can be found -- the classical Arabic *tafsīrs* such as those of al-Bayḍāwī and Ibn Kathīr have been studied extensively in the Islamic educational institutions in the Malay-Indonesian world.

In the nineteenth century, new Islamic centers of learning emerged; one such center was Patani. Among the most famous 'ulamā' there were Shaykh Dāwūd al-Faṭṭānī and Shaykh Muhammad Zayn. However, none of their numerous writings were *tafsīr*. There was one *tafsīr* written during this period, *al-Tafsīr al-Munīr li Ma' ālim al-Tanzīl* (aka *Marāh Labīd*) of Nawawi al-Banteni, first published in Makkah around 1880. It was the first *tafsīr* in the Arabic language ever written by a Jawi scholar.

The twentieth century has been the golden age for Qur'anic commentary in the Malay-Indonesian world. Instead of simply transmitting the Qur'ān and rendering the classical Qur'anic commentaries from Arabic into the Malay-Indonesian language, as Malay-Indonesian scholars in the past did, scholars have been writing in the vernacular

Malay-Indonesian language. Their Qur'anic commentaries vary considerably in their intensity, detail and degree of specialization. These works vary from short translations, like Salim Bahreisy's and Sa'īd Bahreisy's *Terjemahan Sinkat Tafsīr Ibnu Katsier* (a short translation of the *Tafsīr* of ibn Kathīr) and Mahmud Yunus' *Tafsīr Qur'ān al-Karīm* (commentary on the noble Qur'ān), to complete, large volumes, such as al-Siddieqy's *Tafsīr al-Bayān*, Ahmad Hasan's *Tafsīr al-Furqān*, and Hamka's *Tafsīr al-Azhar*.

Hamka's *tafsīr*, a twentieth century commentary, is a very detailed commentary on the Qur'ān. General readers will find it useful because it covers many areas of Islamic sciences, from explications of Qur'anic technical terminologies to the sciences of Qur'ān, jurisprudence, theology, mysticism and, more importantly, modern sciences. Hamka's is a very unique Qur'anic commentary in the sense that it not only covers traditional sciences, but also makes use of the local culture and events to explain the Qur'anic verses. It deserves serious study in order to investigate the insights of this divergence from traditional *tafsīrs*, for it was not common in the *tafsīr* tradition of the Malay-Indonesian world to use local issues and examples to interpret the Qur'ān. Therefore, studying this new trend of *tafsīr* renders a great service to the field of *tafsīr* literature, especially in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago. The *Tafsīr al-Azhar* of Hamka is the most influential

twentieth century *tafsīr* in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago. The author was Indonesian, and wrote in the Malay-Indonesian language, making it popular not only among religious scholars but also among Muslims in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago in general.¹¹

Hamka was a modernist religious scholar, inspired by the nineteenth century Islamic reform movement.¹² This is reflected in his works, which relate to his role as a promoter of and journalist for the *Muhammadiyah* organization in Indonesia.¹³ Throughout his work Hamka fully demonstrated his agenda of reform, especially regarding his home district of Minangkabau, where the matrilineal system of inheritance was practiced. Like his father, he tried to reform this system to conform to the patrilineal Islamic system.¹⁴ Hamka's reform agenda was not confined to *adat* laws but covered many other areas such as mysticism and Islamic jurisprudence. In his book *Tasauf Modern* (Modern Mysticism) for example, he seeks to cleanse Indonesian mystical thought from syncretism, a mixture of animism and corrupted Islamic mysticism.

Mysticism as it was practiced in the early twentieth century was perceived by Hamka as a hindrance to societal progress and development. The practice of seclusion and the other syncretic practices (especially *rābiṭah* and *wāsilah*) among the Sufis was resented by Hamka. Taking the reformist line of argument, Hamka criticized traditional Malay

mystics, such as Hamzah Fansūrī (c. 1550-1600), Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrānī (d.1629) and others who were influenced by the philosophy of *waḥdat al-wujūd* (the unity of being) of Ibn 'Arabī, as well as the thought of al-Ḥallāj. Hamka, however, approved some mystical ideas of al-Ghazālī which were more moderate and compatible with the *Sharī'ah* (Islamic law). Hamka's disagreement with traditional Malay mystics represents the well-known debate between the school of Ibn 'Arabī's *wujūdiyyah*, represented in the person of Hamzah al-Fansūrī, and the more ethical type of mysticism propounded by al-Ghazālī, represented in the person of Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranīrī (d.1658). Hamka's main contention was that "The correct mysticism must not eliminate the boundaries between man and his Creator."¹⁵ In other words, he rejected the idea of *waḥdat al-wujūd* or the "unity of being."

With regard to *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), Hamka criticized existing Islamic jurisprudence, which too frequently engaged in "hair-splitting" arguments which he felt would only lead to rigidity and disunity among Muslims.¹⁶

From 1954 to 1959 Hamka was a member of Parliament under "*Masyumi*." In 1964 to 1966 he was put in prison with other *Masyumi* members because of disputes about artistic freedom of expression, the function of parliament, and the person of President Soekarno himself. The time spent in prison was a productive period for Hamka. This was the

period in which he wrote the first draft of his famous and voluminous Qur'anic commentary, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*. It is by far the longest commentary to have been written by a single author in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago. In addition, it is a testimony to the knowledge and scholarship of Hamka.

In the context of this study, I am interested in the role of *tafsīr* as a mirror of social change. Doubtless, all Muslim scholars agree on the validity and authority of the Qur'ān, but the major debate stems from the applicability of the Qur'anic message to different contexts. Therefore, I intend to critically analyze the indigenous values and elements in Hamka's *tafsīr*. Each *tafsīr* in one way or another, reflects its context in its interpretation, because an interpreter carries with him/her his/her own baggage, which is influenced by custom, language, and other cultural factors. Therefore, it should be borne in mind that Muslims tend to believe that if the Qur'ān is to address all peoples of different races and cultures, there must be a certain flexibility in its interpretation. The *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, which takes into account Malay culture and experiences to interpret the verses of the Qur'an, illuminates well this principle of flexibility of approach in interpretation while maintaining fidelity to the tradition.

Scope of the Study

This study is an attempt to examine the local context of the *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, as scholars always argue that *tafsīr* emerges out of a need to understand the meanings of the verses of the Qur'ān in different contexts and environments. History shows us that *tafsīr* emerges from the local environment. In the very beginning of its development, *tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr* (Qur'anic interpretation by means of transmitted tradition)¹⁷ first arose in an attempt to understand the Qur'ān using traditions of the Prophet, since he was the first interpreter of the Qur'ān.¹⁸ As the Muslim community was not only growing apace in numbers but also was coming into contact with foreign cultures and traditions that were different from those of Arabia, the question of whether or not the traditions of the Prophet and his companions were sufficient in understanding the Qur'ān arose. This presented new problems, conceptually and practically, which called for solutions. Later, the *tafsīr bi al-ra'y* (Qur'anic interpretation according to personal opinion)¹⁹ came into existence at least in part because of the rationalistic tendency in Islam, influenced by Hellenistic philosophy. Proponents of this *tafsīr* claimed that the use of tradition was no longer sufficient and that the use of reason was essential.²⁰

The main thesis of this study is that the impact of *tafsīr* on social phenomena does reflect the social

conditions of a particular time. Muslim scholars never question the validity of the Qur'ān as a revelation from God. Nevertheless, they do dispute the validity of its application to specific events and processes of social and intellectual change. As a result, each sect in the Muslim community pursues its own sectarian aim and attempts to make the Qur'ān relevant to its own point of view and situation. The Qur'ān is used to justify particular ideas, beliefs and practices.²¹

The *Mu'tazilah* school of thought, with al-Zamakhshari's (d.1144) *al-Kashshāf 'an Ḥaqā'iq al-Tanzīl wa 'Uyūn al-Aqāwil fī Wujūh al-Ta'wīl* as its main exponent, opts for rational interpretation of the Qur'ān and the *Mu'tazilah* doctrines of *tawḥīd* (unity of God), *'adl* (justice) and *luṭf* (grace) of God.²²

The *Shī'ī* legal school has likewise interpreted the verses of the Qur'ān to justify its belief system. The authority of the *Imāms* was an important matter in the interpretation of the Qur'ān. Its main exponents are 'Alī ibn Ibrāhīm al-Qummi (d.939) in his *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* and Abū 'Alī al-Faḍl Ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭabarsī (d. 1153), who was one of the important architects of *Shi'i tafsīr* tradition. His encyclopedic commentary entitled *Majma' al-Bayān li 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* is a compendium work comparable to that of al-Ṭabarī. It is well organized but not as extensive as al-Ṭabarī.²³

Legal *tafsīr* (*tafsīr al-aḥkām*) was written to explain legal issues, for example al-Qurtubī's (d.1273) *al-Jāmi' li Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*.²⁴ The philosophically oriented *tafsīr* is represented by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's (d.1209) *Mafātiḥ al-Ghayb*. This dialectical and theological *tafsīr* stresses the dialectical debate, especially between the more traditional Ash'arites and the rationalist Mu'tazilites.²⁵

Mystical *tafsīr* is written to accommodate mystical experience. It is notable for not giving much room for grammatical, rhetorical, legal and theological discourse. This genre of *tafsīr* has the tendency to go beyond the apparent meanings and explore the hidden meanings through intuitive perception. Among its main exponents are Sahl al-Tustarī's (d.986) *Tafsīr al-Tustarī* and *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* of Muḥyi al-Dīn Ibn 'Arabī (d. 1240).²⁶

Modern *tafsīr*, which is included in the category of *tafsīr bi al-ra'y*, is an intellectual and theological reaction to a world in which science, technology, western colonialism and nationalism are among the main objects of discourse. It is an important tool for the modern reformist group who are trying to revive the purity of Islam from superstition, *bid'ah* (religious innovation) and *taqlīd* (unquestioning acceptance of authority). Among its main works are Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā's *Tafsīr al-Manār*; Sayyid

Qutb's *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān* and *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān* of Mawdūdī.²⁷

Hamka, who readily admitted his indebtedness to *Tafsīr al-Manār* and other modern *tafsīrs*, is part and parcel of the modern legacy of Qur'anic exegesis. It is undeniable that these *tafsīrs* have tremendous impact on modern Islamic thought and culture in the Muslim world including Indonesia. Since their inception they have been instigators of social change in the Muslim world. Just as those *tafsīrs* were influenced by their surrounding conditions, Hamka's *tafsīr* reflects the pertinent discourses of his time; it has served as a mirror of Indonesian social change in the twentieth century.

This study is therefore intended to support the thesis that the local environment plays a determining role in the development of Qur'anic exegesis and in its role as a mirror of social change. *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, originally a collection of a series of morning lectures and articles in public journals, appears to be a classic example for such a study. Lectures and public writings are by nature a sort of interactive discourse between author and audience, so that this is not only a *tafsīr* but at the same time a record of the social phenomena that Hamka was trying to address in twentieth-century Indonesia. This can be seen in its incorporation of the local setting, where local issues are used to elucidate the verses of the Qur'ān.

To examine this work critically we will identify some pertinent issues in twentieth-century Indonesia. This will enable us to critically examine the contexts of intellectual, social, political and interreligious relations in Indonesia, which are relevant to our study. The most notable issues in Indonesia at the time of Hamka were national unity and interreligious harmony. Hamka, as one of the main actors in the Indonesian national religious panorama, played a significant role in representing the Muslim side of the equation in interreligious relations. Hamka also witnessed and experienced pain and suffering during the Communist surge. His works reflect the ideological struggle between Islam and Communism. This phenomenon of communication in *Tafsīr al-Azhar* was influenced by the contemporary situation; how this work stands as a mirror of social change is the main thrust of this study.

Tafsīr al-Azhar

Tafsīr al-Azhar is a collection of a series of morning lectures (*kuliah subuh*) given by Hamka between 1959 and 1981 in the Al-Azhar Mosque in Jakarta, and of a series of articles written in the journal *Gema Islam* (The Voice of Islam).²⁸

On January, 27, 1964, Hamka was detained on a false charge of involvement in a conspiracy to assassinate

President Sukarno. While he was in prison, he wrote the first draft of *Tafsīr al-Azhar*.²⁹ That draft was corrected and improved during the first few months following his release on January 21, 1966, after Suharto came to power. Publication of the first four volumes of his thirty-volume work took place in 1968. On July 21, 1981, a few months after the last volume (volume 30) of *Tafsīr al-Azhar* was published, Hamka died.

As Hamka mentions in the introduction to his *tafsīr*, *Tafsīr al-Azhar* was named after a mosque in Jakarta which was given the name *al-Azhar* by the rector of the famous Muslim University *al-Azhar* in Cairo, Egypt.³⁰ It is also said that the name was chosen in honor of his *Doctor Honoris Causa* granted by *al-Azhar* University.

Hamka wrote more than a hundred books, including works of fiction, on subjects as varied as politics, Minangkabau adat (Minangkabau custom), history, biography, Islamic doctrine, ethics, and mysticism. Almost all of his works have been printed, and many have been reprinted several times. Several collections of his writings have been published posthumously. Hamka received honorary degrees from *al-Azhar* University in Cairo in 1958 and the National University of Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur in 1974. The daily *Berita Buana* named him "Man of the Year" in 1980. He had a great career as a journalist, as an Islamic preacher, a politician, and above all as an 'ulamā' and prolific writer.

Sources of the Study

This study will draw on a wide spectrum of materials, including materials about the historical development of *tafsīr* in general, materials about the historical development of *tafsīr* in the Malay-Indonesian world, and more specifically, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*.

In tracing the development of *tafsīr* in the Islamic tradition of learning, this study will use writings such as the following:

Al-Dhahabī (1961)³¹ tries to delineate the development of *tafsīr*, including its methodology, its sources, and, to a certain extent, its relation to Islamic thought in different periods of Islamic history.

'Abd al-Halīm Maḥmūd (1987)³² focuses mainly on the methodology of interpreting Qur'anic verses, the origin of the science of *tafsīr*, and its development into various schools of thought. The history of *tafsīr* bears testimony to the fact that different schools of thought in Islam have interpreted the same verses of the Qur'ān quite differently, reflecting their own perspectives, and more importantly, demonstrating a textual legitimation for their beliefs and dogmas.

Helmut Gatje's, *The Qur'ān and its Exegesis* (1976), besides being a valuable collection of classical and modern interpretations of key passages of the Qur'ān by well-known

Muslim exegetes, also provides some peculiar features of *tafsīr* which are representative of different schools of Islamic thought.

Qur'anic exegesis in the Malay-Indonesian world is still in its infancy in terms of research; not many studies have been done on it. However, there are a few preliminary works available. Studies on this subject generally fall into two major areas. The first includes general works covering a wide range of Qur'anic exegesis in the Malay-Indonesian world such as methodology and the historical connection with the classical Arabic exegesis. The second includes specific works dealing with the commentaries of individual exegetes of the Malay-Indonesian world. All these materials will be dealt with extensively in the following overview.

General Works

A.H. John's "Islam in the Malay World : An Exploratory Survey with Some Reference to the Qur'anic Exegesis" is a brief study of the available *tafsīrs* written by Malay scholars, their methods of interpretation and their inclination toward mystical life and practice. As the title suggests, this study is a preliminary survey and therefore only covers a number of exegetes such as 'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Singkili, al-Nawawī al-Bantenī al-Jāwī and the modern exegete Hasbi al-Siddieqy.

Karel A. Steenbrink's *Beberapa Aspect tentang Islam di Indonesia Abad ke 19, Jakarta* (Aspects of Islam in Indonesia in nineteenth century) (Bulan Bintang, 1984) also covers the method of Qur'anic interpretation among Malay Qur'anic interpreters and juxtaposes one commentator's methodology against the other. The Malay-Indonesian Qur'anic exegetes before the twentieth century were allegedly "less original," too dependent on the classical and Arabic *tafsīrs*. Steenbrink, defending them, argues that they were following the established trend in *tafsīr*, and the addition of new materials might have been considered a weakness.

Another source is Salman Harun's "Hakikat *Tafsīr Tarjumā al-Mustafīd* Karya Shaykh 'Abd al-Ra'ūf Sinkil (The Reality of the *Tafsīr Tarjumā al-Mustafīd* of Shaykh 'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Sinkil)," Ph.D. Dissertation in IAIN, Jakarta, 1988. This study addresses the issue of *kalām* (theology) in Sinkilī's *tafsīr*. However, the dissertation is somewhat brief, so that the theological thought of 'Abd al-Ra'ūf is not clearly distinguished. It also concludes that the well-known identification of *Tarjumān* with al-Bayḍāwī's *tafsīr* is a mistaken identification, as the work appears to be a translation of *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*. The reasons for the earlier misidentification, however, are not well explained.

Peter Riddell's *'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Sinkilī's Rendering into Malay of Jalālayn Commentary*. Berkeley: Center for Southeast Asia Studies, the Regents University of

California, 1990, is an unpublished Ph.D. dissertation written at the National University of Australia. The main purpose of this study is to correct a general misconception that the *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* of 'Abd al-Ra'ūf is a rendering of *Tafsīr al-Bayḍāwī*, for it is rather a rendering of the *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*. In other words, this writer admits that while it is primarily a translation of al-Jalālayn, it also contains material taken from al-Bayḍāwī and al-Khāzin.

Works about Hamka

A good number of works on Hamka as a scholar, poet, journalist, man of letters, and preacher exist. However, as far as I have discovered, there is only one extensive study devoted to his *tafsīr*, Yunan Yusuf Nasution's *Corak Pemikiran Kalam Tafsīr al-Azhar* (Theological Thought in *Tafsīr al-Azhar*). *Tafsīr al-Azhar* is an all-around analysis of the author reflecting all the fields of knowledge that he was involved in and seriously propagated. Since his *tafsīr* is a work that was written during his later years, it contains the mature ideas of Hamka. Some of the important and relevant works on Hamka are as follows:

Junus Amir Hamzah's *Hamka Sebagai Pengarang Roman* (Hamka: a Novelist) is a study of the methodological preferences by Hamka in the field of Malay literature and novel. The author points out that having background in

Islamic education and being a committed Muslim have influenced Hamka's writings. This religious influence is reflected in his novels. Looking at the characters of his novels, almost all of his main characters are passive and humble and like to take refuge in God's will and the predestined nature of existence. Therefore, the author concludes that being religious and young when many things were out of his control politically and socially made Hamka romanticize and take refuge in God.

M. Abduh Almanar's *Pemikiran Hamka: Kajian Filsafat dan Tasawuf* (The Thought of Hamka: A Study of Philosophy and Mysticism) is a study of the philosophical and mystical thought of Hamka. Hamka's mysticism is that of al-Junayd al-Baghdādī and distinguishes between God and everything else in the world. It is not Ibn 'Arabi's *wujūdiyyah* type of mysticism. Mysticism, according to Hamka, should help Muslims to attain good behavior and avoid wicked deeds (*Keluar dari budi perangai yang tercela dan masuk kepada budi perangai yang terpuji*).³³ In this study the author concludes that philosophy, for Hamka, is not just activity of mind but rather a *weltanschauung* of humankind. And it is a reflection of religious philosophy by which religion is analyzed and examined in a critical fashion, but is not divorced from the concept of *tawhīd* (oneness of God). This study, even though concise, is able to present Hamka's world view about the interrelationship between philosophy and

mysticism which is based on the fundamental principle of the oneness of God.

Deliar Noer's "Hamka and Yamin," in *Perceptions of the Past in Southeast Asia*, looks at Hamka as a national figure struggling to establish Indonesian national identity. According to the author, Hamka understood Islam as one of the most important factors in shaping an Indonesian identity.³⁴ Since Islam influenced the Malay-Indonesian language, which in turn became the language of unity for Indonesia's multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, and multi-religious society, the Indonesian identity is inherently Islamic in nature. In contrast, Yamin, another national figure, claimed that the Indonesian identity is based on the Javanese kingdom of Majapahit, but this merely a Javanese nationalistic identity, and therefore has nothing to do with Islam.

In another work of Deliar Noer, *Abdul Aziz Dahlan, Pemikiran Muhammadiyah dalam Bidang Teologi Islam* (1983) (Abdul Aziz Dahlan, Theological Thinker of Muhammadiyah), he studies some theological ideas of Hamka, specifically his notions of free will and predestination. In this sense this study is similar to that of Junus Hamzah, but the latter shows the predestinarian position of Hamka as reflected in his novels. The study by Noer, however, explores his pure theological ideas as adopted by a reform movement in

Indonesia, the Muhammadiyah, which is rationalistic in nature.

Fackry Ali's "Hamka dan Masyarakat Indonesia: Catatan Pendahuluan Riwayat dan Perjuangannya (Hamka and Indonesian Society: A Preliminary Survey of His Life and Struggle)" presents Hamka as a representative of the vanguard among the Indonesian 'ulamā' undergoing modernization. It was written, it seems, for the general public. It is therefore not an academic or critical study.

James Rush's "Hamka dan Indonesia Modern (Hamka and Modern Indonesia)" describes Hamka as one of the most important Muslim ideologues in modern Indonesia, especially with regard to the reformation of ideas among the Indonesian people. Although there were many other scholars who were more learned and more original, Hamka prevailed because of his diligent style, prolific writing and variation of style and approach. Moreover his writings are colorful, emotional, and full of vibrancy. A close look at his writings, according to the author, reveals that Islam occupied the central place in his deliberation, as Hamka believed Islam should be the foundation for Indonesian society. For Hamka, it did not matter whether Indonesia became an Islamic state or not; rather, he wanted Indonesia to become an Islamic society, peaceful and modern.

K.A. Steenbrink's *"Hamka : A Mystical Teacher and Political Leader of the Islam in Indonesia"* (1982) studies

Hamka specifically as a mystical figure and his role in Indonesian politics. Steenbrink, with a special interest in mysticism, writes another article ³⁵ comparing Hamzah Fansuri's mystical approach to *tafsīr* with the voluminous work of Hamka. She concludes that the differences between these two figures are less dramatic than they appear to be, as both of them appreciate mysticism and have written detailed work on the subject. Hamka's criticism of Hamzah, according to Steenbrink, results in the shallow reading of Hamzah's works or Hamka's "ignorance about him".³⁶

Gerard Moussay, "Une Grande Figure de l'Islam Indonésien, Buya Hamka" in *Archipel*, no. 32 Vol. 1. expresses his amazement that, with a very limited modern education, Hamka developed into a very prolific writer and respected journalist, historian, anthropologist, politician and Islamist. This article is a personal appreciation of the exceptional talents of Hamka, and is more of a biography of Hamka than a critical study of his works and ideas.

Yunan Yusof Nasution's *Corak Pemikiran Kalam Tafsīr al-Azhar* (1990) originally was the author's Ph.D. dissertation at IAIN Jakarta and is a study of Hamka's theological ideas in his *Tafsīr al-Azhar*. This is one of the few modern, critical writings about Hamka intended to prove that, theologically, Hamka was a Mu'tazilite. To prove his thesis the author takes up issues such as action and revelation, functions of revelation, free will and predestination, the

concept of *Imān*, the power and absolute will of God, the justice of God, and characteristics and acts of God, and examines Hamka's interpretation of the verses dealing with these questions. These concepts were originally discussed in classical Islamic literature, in which Qur'anic verses were used as the important evidence for the arguments. By comparing the Mu'tazilite interpretations with Hamka's, the author concludes that in some theological issues Hamka belonged to the Mu'tazilite school of theology.

However, the conclusions arrived at by the author are somewhat oversimplified, in that he ignores the dynamism of Hamka's ideas. It may be true that Hamka is influenced by "rationalism" but that does not mean he was a Mu'tazilite. Hamka was a modernist who was interested in the reform of Indonesian society, and therefore, he sought to find practical ways to address the problems facing the people. His main intention was to restore and purify Islam from what he saw as the negative, destructive influences in Indonesian culture, especially those of Minangkabau (matrilineal society). In his rationalism, Hamka was a reformer more in the style of 'Abduh (who influenced him a great deal through Muhammadiyah), concerned with bringing Indonesian society back to the pristine state of an Islamic society. In the section on "*haluan tafsīr*" (Methodological Direction of *tafsīr*) in *Tafsīr al-Azhar*,³⁷ Hamka made clear that he was trying to strike a balance between two trends of *tafsīr*:

tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr (interpretation of the Qur'ān using transmitted materials) and *tafsīr bi al-ra'y* (interpretation by reason). In addition, he was more convinced by the modernist *tafsīrs* of Sayyid Qutb (*Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān*), Rashīd Ridā and 'Abduh (*al-Manār*) and Mawdūdī (*Tafhīm al-Qur'ān*.) As I have argued above, these are modern *tafsīrs* which attempt to deal with the modern world, with modern science and technology; as Hamka rightly put it, "*zaman atom*" (the atomic age). Therefore, there is a need to study Hamka's *tafsīr* and bear in mind all the above factors.

M. Dawan Rahardjo's "Agama dalam Masyarakat Modern: Pandangan Hamka Ulama' dan Pujangga (1993) (Religion and Modern Society: The View of Hamka, A Scholar and Activist)" is an attempt to examine Hamka as a reformer of Islamic sciences. As a man of literature he was able to systematize theology and philosophy, which he called "modern mysticism" (*Tasauf Moderen*). More importantly he contextualized his ideas with the Indonesian situation. He used many personal experiences in Indonesia to explain theological points. This contextualization of Islam in modern Indonesian society made his work relevant to the Indonesian youth. The combination of his knowledge of literature, journalism, fiction-writing, and Islamic sciences made him a unique scholar of Islam in the modern Malay-Indonesian world.

Panitia Peringatan Buku's *Kenang-kenangan 70 tahun Bunya Hamka* (70th Anniversary of Hamka), Jakarta: Pustaka

Panjimas, 1983 is a collection of some autobiographical sketches by different authors presenting Hamka as an Islamic activist, journalist, and historian, and it also reports on some of his travels abroad. It is not a critical study of Hamka but rather a biographical expression of appreciation on the anniversary of his seventieth birthday.

Research Methodology

As the topic suggests, this study has had to rely purely on library research. However, in order to maintain the objectivity of the study, some comparisons with Hamka's contemporary rival thinkers and scholars writings will be noted. Although, this is a study of Hamka's exegetical approach in his original *tafsīr* work, secondary sources will also be considered.

Significance of the Study

In the history of Islamic thought in Indonesia, Hamka remains a towering figure. His contributions to the development of Islam in Indonesia are paramount. He had a great career as a successful journalist, novelist, and above all, as a respected '*ulamā*' whose writings have shaped the direction of Islam in Indonesia. He is one of the few '*ulamā*' in the Malay-Indonesian world to have written a voluminous, original *tafsīr*.

Thus, Hamka is definitely worth studying. Furthermore, this study deals with his *tafsīr*, which, as a mature work of Hamka represents the flowering of his thought. Studying his *tafsīr* is an appropriate way to reveal his thought and allow a glimpse of the social phenomena with which Hamka was battling in twentieth century Indonesia.

As mentioned earlier in this introduction, there are a few studies on Hamka and his thought. Nonetheless, no one has ever studied his *tafsīr* as will this study, "*tafsīr* as a mirror of social change," will attempt to do. This study will endeavor to bring forth the unique characteristics of *Tafsīr al-Azhar* and at the same time prove the hypothesis that modern *tafsīr* can and is being written and used as an agent of social change in the context of the issues and experiences of the peoples of the Malay-Indonesian archipelago in general and Indonesian society in particular.

Problems Anticipated

In the course of writing this dissertation, some problems have been anticipated: as Hamka was an Indonesian scholar who wrote in the Malay-Indonesian language, some of the necessary/relevant materials might not be available in the United States. Secondly, as the writer has no proficiency in Dutch and German, some of the materials that might exist in those languages will not be accessible. However, the second problem will not have a significant

impact on this study because the main subject of this study is Hamka's *tafsīr*, which is in the Malay-Indonesian language. Indeed, all of the writings of Hamka are in the Malay-Indonesian language, a language in which the author was fluent. In addition to materials in the Malay-Indonesian language, materials in English and Arabic are also main sources of reference for this study.

Plan of the Study

This study consists of the following chapters: Chapter One will contain an introduction to the study which includes introductory remarks, the scope of the study, its objectives, its research methodology, its significance, a review of the literature relevant to the study, and the organizational plan of the study.

In Chapter Two, we will critically look at the growth of *tafsīr* in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago and how and in what forms *tafsīr* came into existence in that area. This analysis does not confine itself to *tafsīr* as such but includes how the Muslims of Southeast Asia came to terms with the Qur'ān. As has been recorded, the earliest contact with the Qur'ān was more in its recitation as a form of ritual and in the practice of daily prayers. As society became more complicated the need to interpret the Qur'ān grew. Also, in this chapter we will look at the small and incomplete beginnings of *tafsīr* in the Malay-Indonesian

archipelago as well as the most complete form of *tafsīr* written by Malay-Indonesian scholars.

It is always true that writing comes out of certain phenomena that color it. The *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, therefore, emerged out of its own environment of Indonesia in the middle of the twentieth century. The local settings and the experiences of the author had determined the nature and direction of the writing of *tafsīr*. Thus the intellectual, social and political environment in twentieth century Minangkabau will be studied in Chapter Three.

In Chapter Four, the life and works of Hamka will be investigated. Hamka had a very successful career in journalism and was a very renowned '*ulamā*' in the Malay-Indonesia world. Some of his important works will also be highlighted.

Chapter Five will consist of two sections: a discussion dealing with the structure, style and literary characteristics of *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, and a critical study of *Tafsīr al-Azhar* as a mirror of social change in twentieth century Indonesia. In this section we will concentrate on three important issues facing Hamka at that time: the religious polemic in Indonesia, the function of '*aql* (reason) in Hamka's frame of reference, and mysticism and its vicissitudes. In the discussion of these issues, we are specifically interested in the ways Hamka legitimated his

ideas by referring to the Qur'ān and the tradition of the Prophet.

In addition to the previous chapter, in Chapter Six, we will further investigate *Tafsīr al-Azhar* as a mirror of Islamic thought in Indonesia. Again we will be specifically concerned with the local elements, thought and culture that were used by Hamka as tools to express his thought in his *tafsīr*. Three issues have been selected for this purpose: religious unity, educational reform, and social justice in Indonesia as reflected in *Tafsīr al-Azhar*. It must be borne in mind that *Tafsīr al-Azhar* was written during the period when Indonesia was searching for national identity while the Indonesians were struggling for independence from the Dutch. And, at the same time, Islam in general and the '*ulamā*' in particular were under severe attack by the PKI (Indonesian Communist Party). All these factors certainly have had enormous and sustained impact on scholars and their writings. Hamka's responses to the above elements are seen in his *tafsīr*. Therefore, throughout the study of the thirty volumes of his *tafsīr*, we will carefully examine the local settings that have influenced the science of *tafsīr* in the past.

Chapter Seven is the conclusion of the study. Here, we hope to conclude our findings and highlight perspectives of Hamka's *tafsīr* which reflect Indonesian society. Finally, some suggestions for further research will be made.

ENDNOTES

1. It is not within the scope of this study to account for different theories pertaining to the date of arrival of Islam in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago. It is sufficient to mention that there are at least two dominant theories. The first holds that Islam arrived in the archipelago in the thirteenth century. This claim is based on the historical records of Marco Polo, who reportedly in 1292 C.E. found Muslim merchants in the port of Perlak on the northern coast of Sumatra. See Marco Polo, *The book of Ser Marco Polo, the Venetian, Concerning the Kingdoms and the Marvels of the East*, trans. and ed. Sir Henry Yule, rev. by Henri Cordier, 3rd. ed., vol. 2, (London: n.p., 1903), p. 284. See also Sir Richard Winstedt, "Malaysia" in A.J.Arberry and Ron Landau, *Islam Today* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd, n.d.), p. 221; Nicholas Tarking, ed., *The Cambridge History of Southeast Asia*, vol.1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 330; H.J. De Graaf, "Southeast Asian Islam to the 18th Century" in P.M. Holt, A.K.S. Lambton, and B. Lewis, eds., *The Cambridge History of Islam*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), pp. 124-5. For proponents of the second theory, Islam arrived in the archipelago earlier than its official record. In the late seventh century Arab traders of the Near East already established extensive commerce with Southeast Asia. See T.W. Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam: A History of the Propagation of the Muslim Faith* (Delhi: Renaissance Publishing House, 1984), p. 363. See also al-Attas, "Indonesia," in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, new ed., p. 1218. For the early maritime trade routes of Southeast Asia see O.W. Wolters, *Early Indonesian Commerce, a Study of the Origins of Srivijaya* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1967,) Chapter 2 passim. This account is also supported by H.M. Zainuddin in his book *Tarich Atjeh dan Nusantara* (The History of Aceh and Malay Archipelago) vol. 1 (Medan: Pustaka Iskandar Muda, 1961), pp. 250-2.
2. Historical perspectives of Islam in the Malay-Indonesian world have been studied by scholars such as H.J. De Graaf, *De Regering Van Penembahan Senapati*

Ingallaga (Gravendage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1954); D.G.E. Hall, *A History of Southeast Asia* (London: Macmillan, 1966); Cesar A. Majul, *Muslims of the Philippines* (Quezon City: University of Philippines press, 1978); S.Q. Fatimi, *Islam Comes to Malaysia* (Singapore: Malaysian Sociological Research Institute Ltd., 1963). For a new perspective on history, not based on what has been written by western scholars, see Sodjatmoko, *An Approach to Indonesian History*, translation series, (Modern Indonesia Project, Cornell, 1960). See also S.M.N. al-Attas, *Preliminary Statement on a General Theory of the Islamization of the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1969).

3. Biographical studies, for example, by P.S. Van Ronkel, *Supplement-Catalogus der Maleische en Minangkabausche Handschriften* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1921); William Roff, *Biography of Malay and Arabic Periodicals* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972); A. Teeuw, *Modern Indonesian Literature* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1967); Hamka, *Sejarah Umat Islam* (Djakarta: Nusantara, 1961).

4. For example, the work of C. Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (New York: Free press, 1960); *Islam Observed* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1968). Even though the works of Geertz try to undermine the importance of Islam in the life of the people of Malay-Indonesian world, nonetheless they are significant pieces of work.

5. Scholars such as B. Boland, *The Struggle of Islam in Modern Indonesia* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff 1982); Deliar Noer, *Partai Islam di Pentas Nasional* (Islamic Party in the National Front) (Jakarta: Grafitipres, 1987).

6. See Peter Riddell, "Earliest Qur'anic Exegetical Activity in Malay Speaking States," *Archipel* 38 (1989): pp. 107-124.

7. Examples are found in the works of Hamzah Fansūri and Shams al-Din al-Sumatrānī. See L.F. Brakel, "Qur'anic Quotations in the Poetry of Hamzah Pansuri" Paper delivered at the International Congress for the Study of the Qur'an, A.N.U., a study about the usage of the Qur'anic verses in the poetry of Hamzah Fansūri. See Chapter Two for a detailed discussion on the subject.

8. A.H. Johns, "Quranic Exegesis in the Malay World: In Search for a Profile" in Rippin, Andrew, ed. *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'an* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 258.

9. See 'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Sinkilī, *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* (Singapore: n.p, 1951). For critical studies of this work, see, P. Riddell, "Transferring a Tradition: 'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Sinkilī's Rendering into Malay of the Jalālayn Commentary," (Monograph 13, Monograph series, Centers of South and Southeast Asia Studies, University of California at Berkeley, 1990). This work was originally Riddell's Ph.D. dissertation at ANU, 1987. See also Salman Harun, "Hakikat *Tafsīr Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* Karya Sheikh AbdurRauf Sinkil" (The Reality of *Tafsīr Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* written by 'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Sinkil) (Ph.D. diss. in IAIN, Jakarta, 1988).

10. The issue of translation has always been a critical one. The fact that Malay-Indonesian scholars translated classical *tafsīrs* into the Malay-Indonesian vernacular is a subject of study in itself. Translation is not just rendering words or phrases into another language, but rather creating new meanings and new ideas in a new context. Anton Becker, in his effort to textualize the Javanese shadow play, argues that the most important job description for a philologist is "making ancient [and foreign] texts readable" in another language. A textual unit, he further argues, is interrelated with other parts of the text, with the intention of the author/translator to permit his/her reader to be able to comprehend it. This newly constructed text or translated text is contextualized in the milieu, environment and experiences of the author/translator, and, therefore, becomes an original text for the new readers. For a detailed discussion of this subject, see Anton Becker, "Text--Building, Epistemology and Aesthetics in Javanese Shadow Theater," in *The Imagination of Reality: Essays in Southeast Asian Coherence System*, edited by A.L. Becker & Aram A. Yengoyan (New Jersey: Ablex publishing corporation, 1979), pp. 211-245.

11. To understand specifically the case of readership of Hamka's *tafsīr* in Southeast Asia, the study conducted by Federspiel is essential. He found that Hamka's *tafsīr* is available in three countries: Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore. However, I would add Brunei and Thailand to the list because those are also the Malay speaking countries. See Federspiel, "An Introduction to Qur'anic Commentaries in Contemporary Southeast Asia," *The Muslim World*, LXXXI, no.2 (1991): p. 162, appendix.

12. The Islamic reform movement refers to the ideas propounded by Muhammad 'Abduh (1849-1905) and his disciple Rashīd Ridā (1865-1935), which were originally inspired by the achievements of the western world in education, science and technology. Reacting to western domination and colonialism of the time, these and other modernist thinkers

argued that Muslims must reform their education systems. Theologically, the reform movement promoted early Islamic rationalism, but in a modernist western-inspired form which they strongly believed could go hand in hand with Islam. Therefore, according to them, all rational knowledge, including science and technology, was in harmony with Islam. From then on, through its *tafsirs* and journals, the reform ideas spread widely through the Muslim world. For a detailed discussion, see the work of Charles Adams, *Islam and Modernism* (New York, 1968), which discusses the thought of reform figures, see also, Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago, 1982), which attempts a critical study of the reform movements and their shortcomings.

13. Muhammadiyah is an Islamic reform movement in Indonesia inspired by 'Abduh's ideas of reformism. It was founded on November 18, 1912 in Jogjakarta by Kiyai Hadji Ahmad Dahlan (1868-1923), formerly Mohammad Darwisj. For a complete biography of K.H. Dahlan, see H.M. Junus Anis, *Riwayat Hidup K.H.A. Dahlan, dan Perdjoangannja*, (Life History of K.H.A. Dahlan, His Action and Struggle, 1962). The Muhammadiyah Movement is dedicated to education, stressing *ijtihad* (the right of individual interpretation and judgment) and condemning *taqlid* (the acceptance of the already established judgment as final and having an authoritative character) in religious life, and to the organizational emancipation of women. Its activities cover a wide range of religious, social, educational, and welfare issues for Muslims in Indonesia. See Abdul Mukti Ali, "The Muhammadiyah Movement: A Bibliographical Introduction" (Master's thesis, McGill University, Montreal, 1957); James Peacock, *The Muhammadiyah Movement in Indonesian Islam: Purifying the Faith* (Menlo Park, California, 1978); Muhammadiyah as orthodox movement see Howard M. Federspiel, "The Muhammadiyah: A Study of an Orthodox Islamic Movement in Indonesia," *Indonesia* 10 (Oct. 1970).

14. Hamka wrote his father's biography, *Ayahku: Riwayat Hidup Dr. Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah*. His father was frustrated with the matrilineal adat (custom) of Minangkabau, in which the son would receive unfavorable treatment compared to the daughter, who would inherit the majority of the family property. Hamka sought to reform this custom to be compatible with Islamic law.

15. See Hamka, *Tasauif Moderen* (The Modern Mysticism) (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 12th edition, 1970), p. 34; cf Hamka, *Sejarah Ummat Islam* (The History of the Muslim Ummah) (Jakarta: Nusantara, 1961), p. 899, in which Hamka strongly criticized Hamzah Fansuri for being an advocate of a

doctrine that did not have the strength to launch any actions against foreign domination and colonialism.

16. Hamka, *Tasauf Moderen*, p. 20.

17. *Al-tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr* is a method of Qur'anic interpretation which makes use of the verses of the Qur'an, traditions of the Prophet and the explanations by the companions of the Prophet to explain the verses of the Qur'an. *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, for example, takes this approach.

18. Mustansir Mir, "Tafsīr," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, p. 170.

19. *Al-tafsīr bi al-ra'y* uses sound, rational reasoning to explicate the verses of the Qur'an; an example is *Tafsīr al-Rāzī*. Some traditional scholars in the science of the Qur'ān rejected this type of interpretation as they claimed the prophet himself prohibited the interpretation of the Qur'ān by reason. A tradition reported by Ibn 'Abbās that the Prophet said: "He who says (something) concerning the Qur'ān without knowledge, has taken his seat of fire." See Ibn Taymiyyah, *Muqaddimah fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr* (Kuwait: Dār al-Qur'ān al-Karīm, 1971), p. 105. Tirmidhī says it is *ḥasan ṣāḥih*. However, the proponents of interpreting the Qur'ān by rational reason argued that the Prophet prayed to God for Ibn 'Abbās: "O Lord! bestow upon him a clear comprehension of religion, and the knowledge of interpretation." If the interpretation of the Qur'ān is only confined to traditions, then what is the significance of this prayer?. For detailed arguments for the use of reason in interpreting the Qur'ān, see Rashid Ahmad (Jullandri), "Qur'anic Exegesis and Classical Tafsīr," *Islamic Quarterly* 12 (1968): pp. 86-88.

20. Rashid Ahmad, "Qur'ānic Exegesis," p. 87.

21. Andrew Rippin, "Tafsīr" in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, pp. 240-241.

22. Ibid., p. 240. See also Rashid Ahmad "Qur'anic Exegesis," p. 92.

23. For the development of Imāmī Shī'ī *tafsīr*, see Mahmoud Ayoub, "The Speaking Qur'ān and the Silent Qur'ān: A Study of the Principles and Development Imāmi Shi'i *tafsīr*." in Andrew Rippin (ed.) *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'ān* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 177-198. As for the Ismā'īlī *tafsīr* see Ismail K. Poonawala, "Ismā'īlī *ta'wīl* of the Qur'ān," in A. Rippin, *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation*, pp. 199-222.

24. Mahmoud Ayoub, *The Qur'ān and its Interpreters*, vol. 1, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), pp. 4-5.
25. Ibid., p. 5. See also Mustansir Mir, "Tafsīr," p. 172.
26. See Mustansir Mir, "Tafsīr," p. 173. See also Mahmoud Ayoub, *The Qur'ān and Its Interpreters*, vol. 1, p. 6; Rashid Ahmad "Qur'anic Exegesis", p. 96, 107. It should be noted however that the *tafsīr* of Ibn 'Arabī is wrongly attributed to him. It was written by his disciple, 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī. Whatever the truth may be, the *tafsīr* represents the thought and style of Ibn 'Arabi. See Rashid Ahmad "Qur'anic Exegesis," p. 119.
27. Mustansir Mir, "Tafsīr," p. 175. See also Mahmoud Ayoub, *The Qur'ān and Its Interpreters*, vol. 1, p. 7.
28. See Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, 2nd ed. (Singapore: Pustaka Nasional, 1993), vol.1, p. 48.
29. Hamka reported that while he was composing his *tafsīr* he was very lonely but at peace. This was when he was detained and placed in seclusion in various places, including Sukabumi, bungalow Herlina and Harjuna on the hill of Bri-Mob on Mega Mendung, and later, due to health problems, he was transferred to a hospital. Even in the hospital he was still writing. See Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, vol. 1, p. 42.
30. Hamka, in a separate section of the introduction, *Mengapa Dinamakan "Tafsīr al-Azhar"* (Why it was named "Tafsīr al-Azhar"), specifically explained the reason this name was preferred over other names. See Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, vol. 1, pp. 43-49.
31. Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabī, *Al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufasssirūn*, 3 vols. (Cairo: al-Dār al-ḥadīthah, 1961). This work is academically poor, and should be used cautiously.
32. 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd (1987), *Manāhiḥ al-Mufasssirīn* (The Methodology of the Qur'anic Commentators) (Cairo : Dār al-Kitāb al-Miṣrī, 1987).
33. Hamka, *Tasauf Moderen*, p. 2.
34. Deliar Noer "Hamka and Yamin: Two Routes to an Indonesian Identity," in Anthony Reid & David Marr (ed.), *Perceptions of the Past in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1979), p. 223.
35. Karel Steenbrink, "Qur'ān Interpretations of Hamzah Fansuri (ca 1600) and Hamka (1908-1981): A Comparison," *Studia Islamika*, vol.2, no.2, (1995): pp. 73-95.

36. Ibid., p. 92.

37. Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, vol. 1, 40-42.

CHAPTER 2

THE DEVELOPMENT OF QUR'ANIC EXEGESIS IN THE MALAY-INDONESIAN ARCHIPELAGO

Introductory Remarks

Since its arrival in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago in the thirteenth century, Islam has had a firm foothold in the hearts of the people. As Islam developed and people's consciousness about Islam increased, new problems arose, and more Islamic teachings were introduced.

The study of the Qur'ān was introduced quite early in the form of Qur'anic recitation. The correct reading of the Qur'ān was emphasized more than the understanding of it. As a result, the science of *tajwīd* was taught everywhere in the schools, especially traditional religious schools. But though less emphasized, the science of *tafsīr*, like Islam itself, was brought from the Middle East to the Malay-Indonesian archipelago. Eventually, many classical Arabic *tafsīrs* were read in the original and, later, translated into the Malay-Indonesian language.

The writing of *tafsīr* in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago began very much later, in about the sixteenth century. This does not mean that the Muslims were unaware of the Qur'ān and its interpretation, but rather that it was taught only verbally for a long time, without being written

down. The first beginnings of a written *tafsīr* can be traced to Hamzah Fansūrī in the sixteenth century. Although Fansūrī's work was not a *tafsīr* as such, nonetheless it was significant in that it throws some light on the beginning of the development of Qur'anic commentary. Thereafter more *tafsīrs* were written both in Arabic and in the Malay-Indonesian language by indigenous Malay-Indonesian scholars.

Early Accounts of Qur'anic Exegesis in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago

As has always been the case in the study of the history of the Malay-Indonesian archipelago, the lack of early documents is a major obstacle. The discussion about early Islam in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago has often been mainly occupied with the debate over the different theories regarding the arrival of Islam in that region. Any study that lies outside the realm of this discussion would face some difficulties because it has not been addressed critically. The study of early acquaintance with the Qur'ān among the Muslims of the Malay-Indonesian archipelago, therefore, faces a stiff challenge in the efforts to determine its nature and extent. Having acknowledged the above problem, one can safely assume, however, that Qur'anic studies, together with other branches of Islamic knowledge, such as *ḥadīth*, *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), *kalām* (theology) and *taṣawwuf* (mysticism) were taught from the beginning. This is because they were relevant to the day-

to-day life of the newly converted Muslims of the area.¹ This argument is based on the fact that the Qur'ān is to be read as the source of ritual and laws governing the life of the Muslims. Therefore, it must have been studied by Malay-Indonesian Muslims since the initial encounter with Islam itself.

A.H. Johns, who has studied the religious tradition in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago, admits that the available source materials are inadequate for a comprehensive study. Among the major factors he has identified as contributing to this problem are the following: first, the Malay language, which has been known and used as a *lingua franca* in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago since the fifteenth century could not be the only source of research, because its literature is inadequate. The Malay language, in the early history of the Malay-Indonesian archipelago, was limited as an intellectual medium, as it was largely a language of oral exposition. While Arabic was read and translated into Malay orally, it was not written down.² Second, the tropical climate greatly reduced the life-span of manuscripts and all other written and archeological evidence. Their survival was largely a matter of chance, usually when some Europeans, especially the Portuguese and the Dutch, took some of them home when they sailed away.³

The only exception to this limited role of Malay manuscripts is the existence of a record stating that broad

vernacularization of Islam (Qur'ān, ḥadīth, fiqh, kalām and other related subjects) had achieved a certain standard by the sixteenth century. During this period in Aceh, for example, scholars such as Hamzah, Shams al-Dīn and others used the Malay language as a means of writing in addition to Arabic.⁴ Even so, the sole authoritative language for studying Islam was still Arabic. As a result, many historical gaps have not been filled.

The Early Commentaries and Translations of the Qur'ān in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago

Between the possible thirteenth century date for arrival of Islam in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago and 'Abd al-Ra'ūf's *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* of seventeenth century as the first complete *tafsīr* written by a Malay scholar, there is a gap of almost four hundred years. Scholars have largely ignored this gap because of a lack of evidence for it regarding commentaries on or translations of the Qur'ān. However, looking at the eminent position and prolific literary activities of some scholars of the latter part of that time, such as Hamzah Fansūrī, Shams al-Dīn and Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranīrī, it seems very likely that attempts would have been made to comment on and translate the verses of the Qur'ān into the Malay-Indonesian language. In fact, the extant evidence suggests that there may have been some translations of the Qur'ān even before the recorded beginning of such translation in the seventeenth century. To

identify the position of the Qur'anic commentary during the above period of discrepancy, we will scrutinize the contact with and the use of the Qur'ān by the scholars who actively participated in creating the intellectual and literary legacy of that region.

Hamzah Fansūrī (c. 1550-1600)

The writings of Hamzah Fansūrī⁵ would seem to support this claim that translation of verses of the Qur'ān into Malay-Indonesian language was done earlier than seventeenth century. Hamzah quoted and interpreted the verses of the Qur'ān in his exposition about mystical ideas. Even though this exposition of the Qur'ān is not yet a full-fledged Qur'anic commentary, it provides a crucial resource for investigating the early development of such a preliminary form of *tafsīr*. Besides his poems, there are at least three prose works of Hamzah that contain mystical interpretations of the Qur'ānic verses: *al-Muntahī*, *Asrār al-'Ārifīn* and *Sharāb al-'Āshiqīn*.⁶

Al-Muntahī, the shortest of the three treatises is a profound deliberation of the famous *ḥadīth* of the Prophet: "she or he who knows his or her self, knows his or her Lord." In the elucidation of this tradition Hamzah quoted at least twenty-one verses of the Qur'ān and clearly explained them.⁷ For example, the phrase "and indeed! it is He that

doth encompass all things"⁸ in *Sūrat Fuṣṣilat* (41): 54 is interpreted as follows:

But if the relationship [between the Lord and any thing in this world] is likened to that of the sea and its wave, it is permissible as the verse says:

The sea is the sea, as it was before,
The 'new' are waves and rivers;
Let not forms that resemble them veil
thee, for the shades they form are but
veils.

But the waves exist together with the eternal sea. As the hemistich says: The sea is eternal when its heaves it is called 'waves'--but in reality they are sea--for sea and waves are one. As God most exalted says: "and indeed! it is He that doth encompass all things."⁹

This composition is a poetic illustration of the unity of God and human beings, who, like the sea and the waves, take different forms but in reality are one. It is a mystico-religious way of discussing God and His manifestations. Similar explanations of the *wujūdiyyah* mystical concept can also be found in Hamzah's interpretation of the phrase "He is the First and the Last, the Evident and the Hidden" in *Sūrat al-Ḥadīd* (57):3.¹⁰

The second treatise is *Asrār al-'Ārifīn*, a detailed exposition of fifteen quatrains of poems containing no less than fifty-four quotations from the Qur'ān and/or exhibiting the Qur'anic concept of God and His attributes.¹¹ For example in the explanation of a phrase in *Sūrat al-Naḥl* (16): 40, "...For to anything which We have willed, We but say 'Be,' and it is," Hamzah elaborates:

According to the school of the Mu'tazilah, the Rāfidah (i.e. the Shī'ah) and the Zanādiqah (dualists), God's speech is created. But according to the Prescribed Law (*sharī'ah*) whosoever says that God's Speech is created, is an unbeliever, may God preserve us from such. God's Speech is as the Essence; It is eternal, together with the seven Attributes. But the Speech of God that is conveyed to the Prophet [...] that is written in scrolls, this can be said to be created [...] In its real sense, God alone knows best! God Most Exalted says: "For to anything which We have willed, We but say 'Be,' and it is." (16:40) ¹²

This quotation is a typical dialectical explanation of the verse describing the position of Hamzah in the theological debate concerning the "Qur'ān as the speech of God."

The third treatise, *Sharāb al-'Āshiqīn*, contains twenty-three verses from the Qur'ān.¹³ In *Sūrat al-Qaṣaṣ* (23):88, we read: "...Everything (that exists) will perish except His face..." Explaining this verse, Hamzah says:

When the rain falls on the earth it is called water flowing in the rivers. When the Relational Spirit (*rūḥ al-idāfi*), the Primordial Potentialities (*isti'dād aṣli*) and the Fixed Essences (*a'yān thābitah*) "flow" under the command of the Creative Word "Be!" they are called rivers. When the rivers flow back to the ocean, they become ocean once again, but that ocean is the Most pure. Although the Waves ebb and flow, the Ocean does not shrink or grow vaster for It is the Purest of the pure, as the Exalted says: "Everything (that exists) will perish except His face." (23:88)¹⁴

Hamzah's mystical exposition of the Qur'ān can also be found in his poem on *Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ* (112):

*Laut itulah yang bernama aḥad
terlalu lengkap pada asy'us-samad
olehnya itulah lam yalid walam ulad
walam yakun lahu kufu'an (wan) aḥad*

It is that ocean of being that is called *aḥad*
[Oneness].
The one besought of all is present in all things.
This is why He neither begets nor was He begotten.
And no one is equal to Him.¹⁵

From the above quotations, there is no doubt that Hamzah is thinking in the frame of reference of Ibn 'Arabī's thought. Hamzah, as a follower of Ibn 'Arabī, infused in his poems the mystical philosophy of his master. The *wujūdiyyah* of Ibn 'Arabī is reflected in the above poems: "God is present in all things." Hamzah explains the universe in terms of a series of neo-Platonic emanations and considers each of the emanations an aspect of God Himself.¹⁶ Hamzah is known for his poetry, especially his mystical poetry, which blended Arabic and Malay words and phrases beautifully. It is so eloquent and fluent that scholars believe that such writing could only come out of a long association with the two languages. This pattern has continued till the present, as one can find Arabic loan words abundantly in the Malay language. Scholars speculate that the survival of these poems, despite being the products of a follower of a school rivaling al-Ranīrī, is due to the fact that they were written "by a master-mystic for a spiritual elite, and it was due to the special value that this elite placed on the poems that they survived."¹⁷ This argument is plausible, as Hamzah's scholarship was under the patronage of the palace

and therefore his writings must have been kept in the palace, by the sultan or his dignitaries.

Another way to account for the poems' survival is that they found their way to Holland or another European country. The colonialists took the manuscripts home, so that the works escaped being burned by al-Ranīrī, who was then persecuting "heretical mystics", especially those of the school of Hamzah and his companion and disciple, Shams al-Dīn.¹⁸

In his book *Asrār al-'Arifīn*, we find Hamzah's translation of *Sūrah Tāhā* (20):76:

*Dibalaskan mereka itu (yang Islam) daripada Tuhan mereka itu tempatnya syurga, lalu di bawahnya sungai, masuk mereka itu dalamnya kekal.*¹⁹

Their Lord rewarded them [Muslims] with a paradise beneath it flowing a river. They enter into it [and live in it] eternally.

Hamzah's translation is a reversal of the original verse.

Any standard translation of this verse suggests that:

Gardens of Eternity, Beneath which flow rivers:
They will dwell therein for aye: such is the
reward of those who purify themselves [from evil].

The explanation of the Qur'anic verse by Hamzah is loosely done, using the old style of Malay-Indonesian language. One phrase is not mentioned but is replaced with another which may be Hamzah's intended meaning. The phrase "those who purify themselves" is replaced by general noun "mereka itu" (those) whom he assumed to be Muslims. Be that

as it may, it reveals one significant thing: that translating passages of the Qur'ān is necessary to explain key concepts in the religion.

Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrānī (d.1629)

The use of quotations of passages from the Qur'ān is also found in the works of Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrānī. Peter Riddell quotes from Van Nieuwenhuijze a somewhat free translation of part of *Sūrah Āl 'Īmrān* (3): 19:

*Kebaktian (al-dīn) berkenan kepada Allah itu Islam.*²⁰

The services or servitude accepted by Allah is [by way of] Islam.

It is interesting to note that the term *al-dīn*, usually translated by traditional scholars as "religion of Islam," was translated by Shams al-Dīn as *kebaktian* (from the Malay word *bakti* which means "service".) *Kebaktian* (a noun) therefore, means service to Allah. In the context of the above verse, it may imply that the only "service" or "servitude" to Allah is by way of Islam. This is to differentiate it from any other service, such as the traditional, animistic Malay acts of worshiping spirits which may have been prevalent in Shams al-Dīn's time. This unique translation was not without merit: since this kind of syncretic language was the order of the day, to make use of such a style of language was a clever way to get his point across.

As far as the available information can tell us, the isolated verses of the Qur'ān cited above are the only translations that bear the names of Hamzah and Shams al-Dīn. This seems somewhat puzzling in light of the fact that those scholars lived in the "golden age" of Malay-Indonesian literary production. Because the Qur'ān is the basis for Islamic religion, we should expect a more profound treatment of it. However, the existence of the little evidence of Hamzah's and Shams al-Dīn's employment of the Qur'ān might represent only the tip of the iceberg. Although there is no definite answer to this lack of evidence, scholars attribute the lack to the conflict between Hamzah and Shams al-Dīn on one hand and al-Ranīrī on the other.²¹ Therefore, it is assumed that if indeed there were Qur'anic commentaries written by Hamzah or Shams al-Dīn, they would have been destroyed by al-Ranīrī: Qur'anic interpretation was so sensitive an issue that it would have been the priority of al-Ranīrī to destroy any examples of it that deviated from his opinions.

As we mentioned earlier, there is a four-hundred-year gap in the record between the arrival of Islam in the latter part of the thirteenth century and the first written Qur'anic exegesis in the seventeenth century. During the latter part of this period al-Ranīrī launched a campaign of persecution against the followers of Hamzah Fansūrī and Shams al-Dīn. In this "dark epoch" of the history of Islamic

literature in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago, most of the writings that were considered heretical by the standards of al-Ranīrī were burned or destroyed, especially those of Hamzah and Shams al-Dīn. Even though the root of the conflict may have been the differences in approach to mysticism by two different schools of thought, the effects went far beyond the differences of views between two mystical schools. Had al-Ranīrī confined the conflict to the scope of Sufism, more of the manuscripts by Hamzah and Shams al-Dīn might have survived.

A Manuscript of Qur'anic
Commentary in the Malay-Indonesian World

The scarcity evident during the "golden age" of Malay literary production may be somewhat clarified by the new discovery of an early *tafsīr* manuscript by Riddell.²² He studied a manuscript known in the Cambridge Library collection catalogue as MS li. 6.45. It contains a commentary on *Sūrat al-Kahf*(18) of the Qur'ān and originally belonged to the private collection of the Dutchman, Arabist Erpenius (d.1624). This manuscript, according to Van Ronkel,²³ was brought to Europe from Aceh at the beginning of the seventeenth century, and therefore, was probably written in the sixteenth century. What is important in this manuscript is that its date of composition is during the period in which Hamzah and Shams al-Dīn lived. This was a prolific period for the 'ulamā' of Aceh in the sixteenth

century. If this suggested date is correct, then it must have predated al-Sinkili's *tafsīr*, *Turjumān al-Mustafīd*. Riddell speculates that no other copies of this work are extant, showing that this manuscript's survival was probably due to its being transported away from Aceh so that it escaped destruction.²⁴ Also, the humid climate of Southeast Asia might have contributed to its destruction had it remained in Aceh.

The following, part of the commentary on *Sūrat al-Kahf* (18): 9, is an excerpt from the manuscript. It reveals some insights about the language, the style of commentary, and, to some extent, the sources used in it.

(Tetapi pada sangkamu), ya Muhammad, (bahwa) hendak (segala orang) yang masuk ke dalam (guha dan) ke dalam (raqīm ada mereka itu daripada segala tanda Kami yang amat 'ajab)? Dan Kata setengah ma' nanya bahwa aṣḥāb al-kahf itu tiada 'ajab ia daripada segala tanda Kami, tetapi amat 'ajab akan kejadian tujuh petala langit dan tujuh petala bumi. Adapun yang kahf itu guha (gua) yang dalam bukit itu. Bahwa raqīm itu nama bukit. Kata setengah raqīm itu nama negeri mereka itu, kata setengah raqīm itu nama anjing aṣḥāb al-kahf, kata setengah nama lauh daripada timah atau daripada batu yang tersurat dalamnya nama segala aṣḥāb al-kahf dan kisah mereka itu. Kata Ibn 'Abbas, yang raqīm itu nama serokan dalam[nya] aṣḥāb al-kahf.

(But do you consider), O Muhammad, (that) (all those) who entered into (the cave and) into (raqīm were of Our marvelous signs.²⁵ Some say that the meaning [of raqīm] is that the aṣḥāb al-kahf were not in amazement at Our signs, but rather they were in amazement at the creation of the Seven Heavens and the Seven Earths. As for the kahf, it was a cave in a certain mountain. The raqīm was the name of [the] mountain. Some say that raqīm was the name of their place of origin, others say that raqīm was the name of the dog of aṣḥāb al-kahf, [while still] others say that it was a lead

or stone tablet on which were inscribed the names of the *aṣḥāb al-kahf* and [an account of] their experiences. Ibn 'Abbās says that the *raqīm* was the name of the ravine [in which] the *aṣḥāb al-kahf* were located.²⁶

The study of these manuscripts by Johns and Riddell suggests the following. First, more than one source is used. At least three different *tafsīrs* are involved, namely those of al-Khāzin, al-Jalālayn, and al-Bayḍāwī. This gives the author more freedom in his use of sources.²⁷ Second, the language of the manuscript is "unpretentious and lucid" and "fluent and idiomatic." The work seems to be aimed at the ordinary, literate, Muslim population rather than at the scholar.²⁸ Third, the treatment of the text is concerned with the meaning of Arabic words used in Qur'anic stories, and provides the *asbāb al-nuzūl* (occasions of revelation).²⁹ The style of commentary, language and the preferred sources of this manuscript seem to suggest that the author lived in and came from a different kind of spiritual tradition from that of Hamzah and Shams al-Dīn in which mysticism was the order of the day. However, it can be argued that scholars of the stature of Hamzah and Shams al-Dīn were also well grounded in traditional sciences; therefore, it is not impossible that one or the other was the author of the manuscript. After all, Shams al-Dīn was not an ordinary 'ālim at the court of Sulṭān Iskandar Muda (reg. 1605-1636), but was an outstanding international figure who may be called in modern terms a "foreign minister."³⁰ Nonetheless,

these are only possibilities; the evidence does not indicate clearly the author of this very important manuscript.

Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranīrī (d. 1658)

Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranīrī (d. 1658),³¹ a great scholar of seventeenth-century Aceh, did not write any substantial works of Qur'anic exegesis. Had he written a Qur'anic commentary, it most likely would have been preserved. There is no reason for it not to have survived. Furthermore, he never hinted in any of his books that he had written any Qur'anic commentary. However, there are Qur'anic citations and translations within the larger body of his works. An example can be found in *Hujjat al-Siddīq li Daʿ al-Zindīq*, which gives his translation of *Sūrat Maryam* (19): 90-91:

*Hampirlah tujuh petala langit belah-belah, cerak-ceraklah tujuh petala bumi, dan runtuhlah segala bukit berhamburan tatkala mendengar kata Yahudi dan Nasara ada bagi Tuhan yang bernama Rahman itu anak.*³²

As if the skies are about to burst, the earth to split asunder, and the mountains to fall apart in utter ruin, upon hearing what the Jews and the Christians say, that for God the gracious is a son.³³

This polemical verse of the Qur'ān has been quoted to refute his opponents of the *wujūdiyyah* school of mystical thought. Al-Ranīrī argues that the school's identification of God with the human being is like that of the *Ghāliyyah* who liken God to created things; and those of *Mughīriyyah*, the *Baṭīniyyah*, the *Sabī'iyyah* and the *Hishāmiyyah* who say that

God has a form like that of human beings.³⁴ The *wujūdiyyah* school, al-Ranīrī further argues, is also like the Christians in their belief. The Christians believe that Jesus is the son of God, and in the form of Jesus, "God descended from the world of divinity to the world of humanity...He became a body in the corporeal world, then He returned to the world of divinity."³⁵

From our discussion thus far, it is safe to conclude that there is no evidence that Qur'anic commentary and translation were done substantially before the official beginning of such work by 'Abd al-Ra'ūf of Sinkil. However, the extant evidence indicates that the Muslims of the Malay-Indonesian archipelago were already acquainted with the Qur'ān by then. This can be seen in the partial translations and quotations in the writings of many scholars, as I have indicated. However, the earliest manuscript on Qur'anic commentary in the Malay-Indonesian world studied by Riddell reveals that Qur'anic exegetical activities were very much alive during that period. To discover more of the similarities, many unstudied manuscripts kept in the libraries must be examined.

The First Complete Qur'anic Commentary in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago

The early development of Qur'anic exegesis in its complete form cannot be documented before the middle of the seventeenth century. The first extant work is that of 'Abd

al-Ra'ūf al-Sinkilī (d. 1693),³⁶ the *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd*. Its first publication was around 1884 in Istanbul; it has been reprinted many times and is still widely used. This *tafsīr* has been considered to be simply a translation of al-Baydāwī's commentary, *Anwār al-Tanzīl*. Thus it has been considered to be the first complete rendering of Arabic classical *tafsīr* into the Malay language.³⁷ This acclaimed work was written during 'Abd al-Ra'ūf's long career in the court of the Sultān of Aceh. Hasjmi, a contemporary Indonesian historian, however, maintains that it was written in India during 'Abd al-Ra'ūf's alleged journey to India.³⁸ This opinion, according to Azyumardi, is improbable for several reasons: first, there is no evidence that 'Abd al-Ra'ūf ever set foot in India. Second, such a huge undertaking is quite impossible to be carried out while traveling. Third, his long scholarly career in Aceh and the patronage that he enjoyed there make it very plausible that the work was written in Aceh.³⁹ Be that as it may, it is possible that he started writing before his service in Aceh, but his long career in the Aceh court positively created an opportunity for the writing of this work.

Even though many scholars allegedly claimed that 'Abd al-Ra'ūf's commentary is the most complete rendering of al-Baydāwī's, studies by Riddell⁴⁰ and Salman Harun⁴¹ have found that at least two other sources were used, namely *Tafsīr al-*

Jalālayn and *Tafsīr al-Khāzin*.⁴² And "by far the greater part of the exegetical information in *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* is taken from *Jalālayn*'s commentary."⁴³ The reasons for this misattribution, according to Johns and Riddell, may be due to a misreading of a statement on a title page which appeared in the first printed edition in Istanbul in 1884; it reads as follows:

Inilah kitab yang bernama Tarjumān al-Mustafīd bi al-Jawi, yang diterjemahkan dengan bahasa Jawi, yang diambil setengah ma' nanya dari Tafsīr al-Bayḍawī...

This is a book named *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* in Jawi (Malay/Indonesian) language, which has been translated into the Jawi language. Some of its meanings are drawn from the *Tafsīr al-Bayḍawī*...

The key phrase here is "*setengah ma' nanya dari Tafsīr al-Bayḍawī*," which indicates that Baydawi's *tafsīr* is one of the sources used in this translation. This partial reference is mistaken to mean that this is a complete translation of *Tafsīr al-Bayḍawī*.

S.C. Hurgronje, who also held the same Istanbul edition in his personal library, said of the works of 'Abd al-Ra'ūf: "another famous work of... 'Abdurra'ūf is his Malay translation of Baydawi's commentary on the Qur'ān."⁴⁴ Riddell and Johns, conclude that the statement by Hurgronje is a "misread version" of what 'Abd al-Ra'ūf really said. To make the matter worse, the statement of Hurgronje was taken for granted as the ultimate authority and became a standard

reference for the characterization of 'Abd al-Ra'ūf's *tafsīr* by almost all later scholars.⁴⁵ The statement of 'Abd al-Ra'ūf above seems too clear to be misunderstood. Perhaps a careless reading of the text led S. Hurgronje to his conclusion. No one can identify precisely the reasons behind Hurgronje's ideas, but let us speculate further on the issue.

The misunderstanding would be considerably more understandable if Hurgronje had read a different edition of *Tarjumān*. As a matter of fact, there is another edition of *Tarjumān* which states clearly that it is a "direct translation" of al-Bayḍāwī's commentary. This statement is significant considering in the later edition of Sulaymān Marāghī in 1951, published in Cairo, stated very clearly on the title page that:

*al-tarjamah al-jāwiyyah li al-tafsīr al-musammā
Anwār al-Tanzīl wa Asrār al-Ta'wīl li al-imām al-
qādī al-Bayḍāwī.*

(*Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* is) The Jawi translation of the *tafsīr* called *Anwār al-Tanzīl wa al-Asrār al-Ta'wīl* of the imām and jurist, al-Bayḍāwī.⁴⁶

Had Hurgronje read this edition of *Tarjumān*, his statement would not come as a surprise. However, it is less likely to be the case because in his personal library--which he bequeathed to the Leiden library - was the Istanbul edition. Therefore, it must be assumed that he had read that particular edition.

To further complicate the matter, later editions by The Pustaka Nasional, Singapore in 1951 and *Dār al-Fikr* edition in 1981 state that *Tafsīr Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* has passed the inspection by three jawi 'ulamā' in Makkah. They testified that:

...I testify that I have examined and inspected this celebrated and excellent *tafsīr* by the distinguished Imām al-Bayḍāwī...we have found it [to be] translated into Jāwī as a reliable translation of the original manuscript which is in Arabic, without addition or omission, and without change or substitution, as the translator was al-Shaykh 'Abd al-Ra'ūf bin al-Shaykh 'Ālī al-Fansūrī, one of the greatest scholars of his time...Signatory of Jāwī books in the official press in Mecca: Shaykh Aḥmad Paṭānī, Shaykh Idrīs Kelantānī and Shaykh Dāwūd Paṭānī.⁴⁷

However, Riddell is quite skeptical about this certification. He argues that "it seems very unlikely that Dāūd Paṭānī would sign such a declaration without having examined the text". This declaration therefore, most likely was a later addition to increase the prestige of the *tafsīr*.⁴⁸

To clear up this matter let us look at examples of interpretation of *Sūrah 'Abasa* (80) by 'Abd al-Ra'ūf and al-Bayḍāwī respectively:

In 'Abd al-Ra'ūf's *tafsīr*:

The Prophet's expression changed, and he turned aside because a blind man called 'Abd Allah b. Umm Maktūm came to him. In al-Khāzin it is stated that Ibn Umm Maktūm approached the Prophet s.a.w. when he was speaking confidentially with 'Utbah b. al-Rabi'ah and Abu Jahl b. Hishām and 'Abbās b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib and Abī b. Khalaf and his brother Ummaya b. Khalaf when the Prophet was calling them

to God in the hope that they would accept Islam. Ibn Umm Maktūm said, "O Messenger of God teach me some part of what God has taught you." He called upon the Prophet time and again, not realizing that the Prophet was occupied with them, and so paid no attention to him. Then God's word was revealed, as though to punish [admonish] the Prophet: [...] "(the Prophet) frowned and turned away, because there came to him the blind man (interrupting)." ⁴⁹

In al-Bayḍāwī's *tafsīr*:

...[Ibn] Umm Maktūm approached the Apostle of Allah while the leaders of Quraysh were with him, and he was urging them to accept Islam. And he said: "O, Apostle of Allah, teach me something of what Allah has taught you." He repeated this, not realizing that the Prophet was occupied with these people. The Apostle of Allah did not like him interrupting his words, and frowned, and turned away from him and (this *surat*) was revealed. Thereafter the Apostle of Allah used to honor him, and say whenever he saw him: "Welcome to you on whose account my Lord reproved me," and he appointed him twice as his deputy in Medina. ⁵⁰

These two interpretations of the *asbāb al-nuzūl* for *Sūrat 'Abasa* (80) show that the difference between 'Abd al-Ra'ūf's *tafsīr* from that of al-Bayḍāwī is one of details, not of substance. This can be seen that certain informations in 'Abd al-Ra'ūf such as the phrase "as though to punish the Prophet" is not mentioned in al-Bayḍāwī's *tafsīr*. Likewise the phrase "Welcome to you on whose account my Lord reproved me" is not mentioned in 'Abd al-Ra'ūf's *tafsīr*.

Textual studies comparing *tafsīr* of al-Bayḍāwī, al-Jalālayn and al-Khāzin with *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* conducted by Johns and Riddell show that all of the above sources were

used.⁵¹ Both scholars further argue that 'Abd al-Ra'ūf also resorted to Jalālayn's commentary. This makes more sense than the idea that he simply translated al-Baydawi's work, since Jalālayn's is more pedagogical and more popular, fitting the teacher 'Abd al-Ra'ūf's pedagogical objective.⁵² A perusal of various Arabic manuscripts in the collection of the Southeast Asian library, Riddell argues, suggests that Jalālayn was a popular Qur'anic commentary in the Islamic centers of learning in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago.⁵³

Azyumardi, on the other hand, argues that 'Abd al-Ra'ūf's preference for al-Jalālayn's *tafsīr* over the other *tafsīrs* is because of his intellectual and spiritual genealogies. Through two of his teachers, Aḥmad al-Qushāshī (d.1661) and Ibrāhīm al-Kurānī (d.1690), 'Abd al-Ra'ūf received the *ijāzah* to transmit all the sciences he received through successive lineage which included one of the two Jalāls, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī.⁵⁴

Riddell adds, al-Zamakhsharī's and al-Bayḍāwī's commentaries are in the realm of the specialist in *tafsīr*. Therefore, for 'Abd al-Ra'ūf to make them his main reference is somewhat problematic, considering his readers at the time of his writing were ordinary Malay Muslims.⁵⁵ Be that as it may, 'Abd al-Ra'ūf's rendering was a giant step forward in the history of Islamic learning in the Malay-Indonesian world. It is not only the first complete translation of Qur'anic exegesis, but it provides a solid foundation for

bridging the gap between *tarjamāt al-Qur'ān* (translation of the Qur'ān) and *tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (interpretation of the Qur'ān.)

Unproductive Period for Qur'anic Commentary in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago

The eighteenth century was an unproductive period for the development of Qur'anic exegesis in the Malay-Indonesian world. The solid foundation provided by 'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Sinkilī in the seventeenth century was not built upon by later the Malay-Indonesian 'ulamā' in the eighteenth century. The reason for this lack of interest in Qur'anic exegesis remains a matter for further research. Ties with the Middle East were still strong; many students were still studying there, and more were going there than ever before. Hence, Islamic intellectual productivity was not at all hampered, as more Islamic literature was translated into the Malay-Indonesian language. We now turn to the intellectual and literary scene of eighteenth century to catch a glimpse of the intensity in intellectual productivity.

In the eighteenth century, some major Arabic works began to be translated into Malay. One such work is *Siyar al-Sālikīn* of 'Abd al-Ṣamad of Palembang (d. 1828). The work is translated (with commentaries) from the famous al-Ghazālī's (d. 1111) *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*. During a twenty-year period (1760-1780) in al-Ṭā'if, 'Abd al-Ṣamad translated this major work into Malay. This work is not a word for word

translation, but rather, as Johns correctly puts it: "the rendering is free, abridged in some places, but enlarged and supplemented in others."⁵⁶

Even though this work of 'Abd al-Ṣamad cannot be regarded as *tafsīr* as such, on account of its many citations of the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth*, as Johns puts it, it may be categorized as a "secondary *tafsīr*."⁵⁷ One is thus tempted to use it to partially fill the gap left in *tafsīr* literature until the appearance in the nineteenth century of the work of al-Nawawī al-Jāwī.⁵⁸ To do so may seem rather risky, as almost anything could then be considered *tafsīr*, but the notion of "secondary *tafsīr*" remains helpful nevertheless because it provides contact with the Qur'ān.

The eighteenth century also marks the rise of South Sumatra as an important center of learning. There were at least two important figures in this movement: Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Kemas (1719-1763) and Kemas Fakhr al-Dīn (second half of the eighteenth century). Kemas wrote under the patronage of Sulṭān Maḥmūd Badr al-Dīn of Palembang. Kemas was an Arab scholar of considerable popularity, especially in Palembang. Fakhr al-Dīn wrote *The Kitāb al-Mukhtaṣar*, a mystical treatise based on the work of Wali Raslān al-Dimishqī (d.540/1146), *Risālah fī al-Tawhīd* (a Treatise on Divine Unity).⁵⁹

During this period, as reported in *Hikāyat 'Abdullah* (the Story of Abdullah), a new *qārī* (Qur'anic reciter), an

Arab shaykh from Yemen who lived in Aceh, came to Malacca to teach Qur'anic recitation. He was an effective teacher and astounded people with his skill of recitation. Shortly after this qārī left, another Yemenite Shaykh, Ibn 'Alawī from Bayt al-Faqīh, arrived.⁶⁰ Shaykh Ibn 'Alawī was not only qārī but also learned in jurisprudence. This account of 'Abdullah shows that during that period Muslims, especially in Aceh and Malacca, were deeply engaged in the learning of the Qur'ān and other religious sciences. This can be discerned from the mobility of the religious teachers who always found students to teach and consistently made a living out of it.

It is not known why works on Qur'anic commentary were not available. Nonetheless, the composition of exegetical works such as the *Mukhtaṣar* by Kemas Fakhr al-Dīn and *Siyar al-Sālikīn* of 'Abd al-Ṣamad, combined with the art of Qur'anic recitation of Arab shaykhs, reveal that Muslims were still deeply involved in Islamic education.

In the nineteenth century, various other regions of the Malay-Indonesian archipelago came into the picture as centers of Islamic education. In one of these regions, Patani,⁶¹ one name is raised above all the others: Dāūd Ibn 'Abdullāh Ibn Idrīs (also known as Shaykh Dāwūd al-Faṭṭānī).⁶² Shaykh Dāwūd is well known in the Malay-Indonesian world as a *faqīh* (Muslim jurist). Like other Malay scholars of his era, he spent most of his working life

in Makkah. Some of his works have been printed, but quite a number of them have remained in manuscript form.⁶³ Shaykh Dāwūd was a prolific writer in both the old Malay and Arabic languages; rather surprisingly, none of his works may be considered Qur'anic exegesis *per se*. Nevertheless, Qur'anic and hadith citations are found throughout his works as he discusses the subjects of *kalām* (theology), *tasawwuf* (Sufism), and *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence). In 1824 he translated al-Ghazalī's *Minhaj al-'Ābidīn* into Malay, and in 1838 he compiled *Furū' al-Masā'il wa-Usūl al-Masā'il*, a work on jurisprudence. Many other important works of his have been published.⁶⁴

Many other scholars from Patani were well-known in Makkah, including Shaykh Zayn al-'Abidīn bin Muḥammad al-Faṭanī (d.c. 1950) who wrote *Kashf al-Ghaybiyyah* and *'Aqīdat al-Nājīn*, a work about Islamic belief and creed, first printed in 1890; Muḥammad bin Ismā'īl bin Dāūd (d.c. 1950) who wrote *Maṭla' al-Badrayn*, a work on jurisprudence and theology completed in 1885-1886 and appearing in several different printings.⁶⁵

It is strange that during the period of the flowering of intellectual tradition in Patani none of these scholars wrote Qur'anic exegesis. One exception to this general trend was 'Abdul Kadir [Qādir] b. Haji Wa'ngah who wrote a treatise titled *Minhaj Ahl al-Sunnah*, a commentary on *Sūrat al-Shūrā* (chapter 42) completed in 1984.⁶⁶

The reason for this general unproductiveness for Qur'anic exegesis in the Malay-Indonesian world is not quite clear. However, S. Hurgronje in his *Mekka in the Latter Part of the Nineteenth Century* explains that the science of Qur'anic exegesis is "the higher science," that it must be preceded by study of *tajwīd* (Qur'anic recitation) and recitation of the whole Qur'ān several times.⁶⁷ At the same time, according to Hurgronje, *tafsīr* is "the least creative subject" in the sense that it only repeats what has been said in previous *tafsīrs*.⁶⁸ These arguments were logical deductions from impressions gained from his encounters with many Malay 'ulamā' who were living and studying in Makkah, and from his observations of what had been happening in the educational systems of Makkah in the nineteenth century.

Whether Hurgronje realized it or not, the reasons for the lack of innovation in *tafsīr* in Indonesia and Malaysia were quite different. Some of the *mufasssirūn* (Qur'anic exegetes) were restrained by the warning of the Prophet that those who interpret the Qur'ān using their own will and fancy will receive a severe punishment from God in the hereafter.⁶⁹ However, this is an unlikely reason, since it did not deter commentators at any time in Muslim history from interpreting the verses of the Qur'ān. The above tradition must be taken to mean that interpretation of the Qur'ān is not absolutely prohibited, it stands as a warning against irresponsible scholars who might interpret the

Qur'ān in ways not based on a profound knowledge of Islam. It was enough to deter the Malay 'ulamā' who felt humble at the prospect of freely interpreting the Qur'ān. Since the Qur'ān is the uncreated word of God, such an action could be considered a crime against God. However, this is too very unlikely since Muslims are urged to understand the Qur'ān. Hurgronje's arguments above may be the closest and the most logical in this matter.

**The Earliest Qur'anic
Commentary Written in Arabic
Language by a Malay-Indonesian Scholar**

Religious institutions also flourished in Java during the nineteenth century. Banten (West Java) was the oldest port city of the island; since 1524 it had been an important Islamic center of learning. However, not until the nineteenth century did it produce a notable scholar, the remarkable Muḥammad bin 'Umar bin 'Arabī bin 'Ālī al-Nawawī al-Jāwī al-Bantenī al-Tanarī (1815-1889). The merit of his works established him in the Middle East and other Islamic centers of learning throughout the world.⁷⁰

Al-Nawawī was born at the beginning of the nineteenth century in a village called Tanara in West Java and died in Makkah at the end of the nineteenth century. During his visit to Makkah Hurgronje met al-Nawawī in person.⁷¹ He noted the titles of a few of al-Nawawī's important works such as his *Fath al-Mujīb* which appeared in 1881 and a

commentary on *Dār al-Farīd* (The House of the Solitary). In the same year, al-Nawawī published a commentary on an Arabic grammatical work, *Matn al-Ajrūmiyyah*.⁷² This work is still widely used in the traditional Islamic school, the *pondok*, in Southeast Asian countries.

In 1886 al-Nawawī wrote *Dharī'at al-Yāqīn*, a commentary on the work of al-Sanūsī (d.892/1486). The most popular of his works is *Tafsīr al-Munīr li Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl*, known as *Marāḥ Labīd* (Compact Bliss), along with the *Kitāb al-Wajīz fi al-Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīz* of al-Wahidī (d.1076) on its margin. This two-volume Arabic language *tafsīr* was published in Egypt in 1887 and later also in Makkah. It is widely used not only in the Malay-speaking world but also in the Arab world, especially in countries that follow the Shāfi'ī school of law. It has been reprinted in the original Arabic several times in various places such as Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore but has never been translated into Malay.⁷³

While 'Abd al-Ra'ūf (d. 1693) was the first scholar to translate Arabic *tafsīr* into the Malay Language, al-Nawawī was the first Jawi scholar to have write a full-fledged *tafsīr* in Arabic. He explained that the reason for his writing was to satisfy the request of friends. At the beginning he was hesitant to write because of the hadith which disapproves of interpretation of the Qur'ān according to one's own opinion. Due to this prohibition, he, like his

predecessors, wrote *tafsīr* only to preserve knowledge, not to add anything new.⁷⁴

The *Tafsīr al-Munīr* of al-Nawawī is quite a systematic treatment of the Qur'ān. Al-Nawawī lists his sources in the introduction: the *Mafātiḥ al-Ghayb* of al-Rāzī (d. 1209); the *al-Futūḥāt al-Ilāhiyyah* of Sulaymān Ibn 'Umar al-'Ujayli al-Azharī (d.1790); the *al-Sirāj al-Munīr* of Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad al-Khatīb al-Shirbinī (d. 1570); The *Tanwīr al-Miqbās*, attributed to Ibn 'Abbās (d. 687), and the *Tafsīr Abū al-Sa'ūd*.⁷⁵

To my knowledge there is no study of al-Nawawī's Qur'anic commentary apart from a mention by Hurgronje and a study by Johns. One needs to study the nature and scope of the work, the reasons for preferring one source over another, and how the sources were used. All these questions need to be addressed in order to form some idea of al-Nawawī's scholarship, technique of writing, and his intellectual and spiritual inclinations. To do all this would require a major study of him and his *tafsīr* which is beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, Johns' treatment of *Sūrat al-Ḍuḥā* (93) and *Sūrat al-Tīn* (95) will give a glimpse of the answers to the above questions. Johns suggests that:

He used *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* as his first resource to find synonyms for Qur'anic words. He read that work in conjunction with *al-Futūḥāt al-Ilāhiyyah*. He used al-Shirbini's *Sirāj al-Munīr* as an additional source for synonyms and explanations of

words and phrases. It is also clear, however, that he placed considerable reliance on the *Mafātih (al-Ghayb)* of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and made direct and copious use of this work.⁷⁶

This usage of the Qur'anic commentaries is not without reason. Al-Nawawī may have used *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* because of its popularity among Malay students in Makkah. Its treatment of the Qur'ān is concise, its language is simple, and it provides appropriate *asbāb al-nuzūl* (occasions of revelation) needed to understand the meaning of the Qur'ān. *Al-Jalālayn* is a legalistic commentary; for al-Nawawī to utilize it makes perfect sense when one considers that his main target audiences were Malays and Indonesians who were interested in this kind of guidance for their daily Islamic activities.

This brief analysis of al-Nawawī's Qur'anic commentary by no means should represent his fixed style of interpretation. Nonetheless, from the exposition by Johns, a few points can be derived: it is simplified, has a variety of sources, avoids controversial interpretations, and is pedagogical in nature, so as to provide a strong foundation for more complicated and specialized commentaries on the Qur'ān. This pedagogical nature, of al-Nawawī's work is also manifested in the introduction of one of his works on Shāfi'i jurisprudence, *Sulūk al-Jadab*, 1883, which he states that it is written to be a reminder for himself and for those of the same race as he who are lacking in knowledge.⁷⁷

The use of *Tafsīr al-Rāzī* by a Malay scholar is a point of some significance, as al-Rāzī is known for his rationalistic interpretation and linguistic study of the Qur'ān. However, after looking at some of al-Nawawī's writings, the curiosity aroused is partly satisfied. The commentary on *Matn al-Ajrūmiyyah* was written in 1881, before he wrote his *tafsīr*. This shows that Arabic grammar was something of a special love for al-Nawawī; thus al-Rāzī's *tafsīr* is a logical reference. Since the *Tafsīr al-Manār* of 'Abduh had not been published yet, al-Nawawī found an already-established rationalism in al-Rāzī.

Al-Nawawī states very clearly that his writing is just "a renewal of knowledge," a new presentation of established knowledge for the benefit of his readers in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago.⁷⁸ As a teacher, he was concerned with the intellectual development of his students, his countrymen in West Java in particular, and the Malay-speaking world in general. He wished to develop a sense of direction that would benefit the Muslims of that region. To meet this objective he combined popular trends in *tafsīr*: *tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr* (Qur'anic interpretation by means of transmitted tradition) and *tafsīr bi-al-ra'y* (Qur'anic interpretation according to personal opinion.)⁷⁹ By so doing, he hoped to give his students a solid foundation in Islamic knowledge. He did not limit the importance of his *tafsīr*, but rather elucidated his intentions in it.

The lives of scholars from the Malay-Indonesian world are generally unknown, and al-Nawawī is no exception. Nevertheless, his reputation was great. He was reported to have met the great Muslim reformer Muḥammad 'Abduh, who was both a *Muftī* (judge) of Egypt and Shaykh of al-Azhar University.⁸⁰ As a result of this reported meeting, scholars have raised many questions. Did al-Nawawī really meet 'Abduh? Was al-Nawawī influenced by 'Abduh's rationalism? Are any of 'Abduh's ideas reflected in al-Nawawī's commentary on the Qur'ān?

These questions are legitimate ones, but there are no easy answers. Thorough studies have to be done, for 'Abduh's ideas are "multi-faceted" and will be addressed differently in different contexts. Different people who have encountered his thought will have different impressions. In Southeast Asia, people of various geographical regions and of various cultures would receive 'Abduh's ideas in their own ways. To see their influences in each region, a separate study is called for.

To determine the extent of 'Abduh's influence on Southeast Asian exegetical thought, one would have to determine the relationship of al-Azhar and the students of Southeast Asia: one has to know when Malays started to attend al-Azhar for study, in what numbers, and how widely circulated the publications of 'Abduh and his reformist

successors were. It is no doubt an interesting question, but this, too, calls for a separate study.

One can only conjecture that al-Nawawī may have been influenced by 'Abduh, but shining a light on the evidence makes it clearer in the work of an Arab Sayyid, Aḥmad Sorkatie. He was originally from Sudan, a teacher in Batavia in 1908. According to Johns, using Qur'anic exegesis, Sorkatie pioneered the reformist ideas of 'Abduh in Southeast Asia. He wrote in Arabic and had someone translate his works into the Malay Language. His lectures which were in Arabic were also transcribed and translated into the Malay-Indonesian language.⁸¹ An examination of his treatment of *Sūrat al-Fātiḥah* (first chapter of the Qur'ān) makes clear that his reformist ideas closely resemble those of 'Abduh. After elucidation of the basic meanings of the *Sūrah*, Sorkatie relates them to the main arguments of reformist ideas:

When Islam came, it addressed itself to reason, arousing it and alerting it to modes of proof of the existence of God and His attributes, condemning inflexibility and the blind imitation of fathers and forefathers in this regard [...] This is why it is said that Islam is the religion of the intelligent and the generous, not the religion of the stupid and avaricious [...]⁸²

It is beyond reasonable doubt that in this case 'Abduh's reformism is at work. Reason in the realm of religious matters is given an exalted position. "Reason" to the reformers can make different experiences and problems

compatible with the Qur'ān, and enable one to find the solution in the Qur'ān. In other words, new *ijtihād* (religious injunction derived from intellectual reasoning) must consistently be applied to address new, modern problems and issues, so that the dynamism of Islam is kept intact. Therefore, it is not surprising to find in the reformist Qur'anic commentaries traditional subjects such as *qirā'āt* (the science of the Qur'anic recitation), and *isra'īliyyāt*⁸³ given scant attention. In contrast, *asbāb al-nuzūl* (occasions of revelation), the personality of the Prophet Muḥammad, and the Qur'ān itself were strongly emphasized. In general, this group argued that in order to preserve the dynamism of Islam in the modern world, reason must play a vital role in interpreting the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*, as well as in the Islamic legacy as a whole.⁸⁴

Another contemporary of Sorkatie, was Sayyid Shaykh bin Aḥmad al-Hādī (1867-1934). Aḥmad al-Hādī was born in *Kampong Ulu* (Ulu village), Malacca, to a Malay-Arab family. He was sent to Malay school and studied in Riau under a famous 'alim, Raja Hāji 'Ālī. After acquiring the necessary background in Islamic sciences, he was sent to Arabia and then to Egypt, where he studied under Muḥammad 'Abduh, whom he deeply admired as a great reformer.⁸⁵

Al-Hādī's career as a writer began with light romance works in Arabic. But the turning point was in 1926 when he started a monthly journal, *al-Ikhwān* (The Brothers).⁸⁶ In

this journal al-Hādī published works on reform ideas such as the need to purify Islam and the need to address modern issues, following 'Abduh's ideas. In the editorial section, he translated, with commentary, short verses of the Qur'ān from 'Abduh's *tafsīr*. In 1927 and 1929 al-Hādī compiled his translations and published them under the title *Tafsīr Juz' 'Amma* (Commentary on the Section of *Amma*) and *Tafsīr Sūrat al-Fātiḥah* (Commentary on *Surat al-Fātiḥah*).⁸⁷ As a matter of fact al-Hādī's work was modeled after the work of 'Abduh who wrote a similar commentary.

The modern reform movement was further solidified with the translation of the great Qur'anic commentary, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān* (In the Shades of the Qur'ān) of Sayyid Quṭb (d. 1966). It is important to note that even though Sayyid Quṭb was not a disciple of 'Abduh and opposed the latter's over-emphasis on rationalism; nonetheless, they represent different developmental stages of this one movement.

The two volumes of this commentary appeared for the first time in the Malay-Indonesian language as early as 1952. The first attempt to translate this work was around 1950, or perhaps earlier. This was done by Salīm Bahrajsj and Moḥammad 'Alī under the title *Dibawah Naungan al-Qur'ān: Tafsīr Populer dan Progressif* (Under the Shades of the Qur'ān: A Popular and Progressive Commentary). It was published in 1952 in Surabaya by Pustaka Progressif. The appearance of this important commentary in the Malay-

Indonesian language made a significant addition to the list of new commentaries in the language spoken by the majority of the people of Southeast Asia.⁸⁸

To sum up, at the beginning of its development, Qur'anic exegetical activity in the Malay-Indonesian world used only partial citations of the Qur'ān and the ḥadīth of the Prophet. As more Malay-Indonesian people studied in Makkah, they started to produce more specialized works. In the field of *tafsīr*, the works of 'Abd al-Ra'ūf and al-Nawawī emerged to meet the needs of the people of that time. Interestingly, the trend is moving toward the rational approach of *tafsīr* started by al-Nawawī and later expanded upon by Sorkatie in 1908. one trend remained noticeable at least up to the first half of the twentieth century, and that is the methodological dependence of Qur'anic commentaries written by Malay-Indonesian writers on classical Arabic works. This may be due to the nature of the science of *tafsīr*, in which interpretation must in some way always be connected to classical models. The Qur'ān was revealed to the Muslims of the earlier generation who must have known better the meanings of its words and expressions. Thus later generations refer to them for basic meanings of the Qur'ān. This tradition has therefore created an intellectual link that binds together the generations of Qur'anic interpretation.

**The Present State of Qur'anic
Exegesis in the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago**

Currently, Qur'anic exegesis in the Malay-speaking world is becoming a popular subject of discussion. This is supported by the appearance of new *tafsīrs* written in the Malay-Indonesian language. These new *tafsīrs* have emerged in order to directly address new problems faced by the people. They are produced by scholars who are familiar with their co-religionists' problems. In other words, *tafsīr* literature has now emerged out of the local context and is written in the vernacular languages of Southeast Asia. It is in some ways independent from earlier Arabic *tafsīr* tradition, though not so much in the methodology as in the issues and raw materials that make up the *tafsīr*. As a result it marks a new phase of the study of *tafsīr* in Southeast Asia.

Twentieth-century developments have further enhanced and strengthened the Malay-Indonesian language as a medium of scholarship, especially in the field of *tafsīr*. Malay scholars who are directly involved in the daily life of the people have put forth concentrated efforts to write indigenous *tafsīr*.

Despite the intense activity in the area of Qur'anic commentary in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago in the twentieth century, its detailed documentation is rather inadequate: few surveys are available. 'Abdul Kahar Muzakir provides a glimpse of the activity of Egyptian Qur'anic commentators whose works are read by the people of the

Malay-Indonesian archipelago. At the top of the list is 'Abduh, followed by Ṭanṭāwī Jawharī (d.1940).⁸⁹ Howard M. Federspeil also has provided a valuable survey of complete Qur'anic commentaries in print which are widely available in Southeast Asia. He has identified approximately thirty complete *tafsīrs* existing in this region.⁹⁰ One must say "complete" because many still may be in progress, or remain partial commentaries. Were we to include incomplete works, the number would double.⁹¹ To give a clearer picture of present *tafsīr* activity in the Malay-Indonesian world, it is necessary to update this list.⁹² Updates works range from mere translations of the Qur'ān from Arabic to the Malay language to complete Malay works of *tafsīr*. The latter category is socially more significant because of its incorporation of local issues and problems in the writing of *tafsīr*. The *Tafsīr al-Azhar* of Hamka is the best representative of this category.

It should be noted that Southeast Asian Qur'anic commentaries are written in three distinct forms. These are either introductory explications of the text, marginal glosses or interlinear notes. Introductory commentaries normally explain some basic rules for reciting the Qur'ān, Qur'anic etiquette, historical aspects, and other Qur'anic sciences. Problems of translation and transliteration are often outlined.⁹³

Marginal glosses are used to classify and acknowledge sources, especially classical Islamic sources. Classification is often used to paraphrase and explain difficult passages. *Hadīth* and other Islamic sources are quoted to clarify the issues in the text. This type of Malay Qur'anic commentary incorporates earlier materials and traditions. The best examples are the *tafsīr* of Aḥmad Hasan, *al-Furqān*, Hamidy's *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (The Interpretation of the Qur'ān) and Maḥmud Yunus's *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (The Interpretation of the Noble Qur'ān).⁹⁴

Interlinear notes are explications of words and phrases of the text, intended to stress the meaning of the Qur'ān rather than its science. Therefore, it is common to find in this type of *tafsīr* comprehensive explanations, the lessons of the verses of the Qur'ān and their context in Islamic scholarship.⁹⁵ *Tafsīr al-Azhar* of Hamka and *Tafsīr al-Bayān* of Hasbi al-Siddieqi are among the important works using this method. Siddieqi's interlinear notes only expand the marginal glosses. On the other hand, Hamka's work is unique in that he often makes reference to events which occurred in the twentieth century or in his lifetime, in Indonesia or elsewhere. His methodology is somewhat different from the traditional *tafsīrs* in the sense that his interpretation of the Qur'ān is partly a "thematic approach" *al-ittijāh al-mawḍū'ī fī al-tafsīr* (thematic approach in Qur'anic exegesis).⁹⁶ Hamka also partly uses the traditional

"analytical approach" (*al-ittijāh al-tajzī'i fī al-tafsīr*)⁹⁷, verse for verse interpretation. Nonetheless, seen from the perspective of the content of Hamka's *tafsīr*, he has injected some new and indigenous materials into the Qur'anic interpretation.

In the twentieth century the writing of Qur'anic commentaries has crossed the borders of Indonesia into Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, and Thailand (Patani). From the survey made by Federspeil, out of thirty-one authors there are sixteen writers and five translators who are Indonesian, four writers who are Malaysian, six writers and one translator who are from the Middle East, two writers and one translator who are Singaporean, two writers who are Thai, and one from Brunei.⁹⁸ Thus, from the above figures, more than half of the Malay Qur'anic commentators appear to be Indonesian.

In reality, however, no boundaries exist in the world of scholarship; work produced in one place may grow and develop in another. The same principle can be applied to the growth of the science of *tafsīr* in the Malay-Indonesian world. The works written by Indonesians were more widely used in the Malay-Indonesian world than those by other authors in other countries. This is for several reasons, the first of which is the commonality of the language. Though the Malay language is the common language for the people of Southeast Asia, it is written in two different scripts:

Roman and Jawi (Arabo-Persian). Therefore, it is not uncommon that in parts of Southeast Asia one script will be preferred to the other.⁹⁹ Second, in the common market economy of Malaysia and Singapore, the movement of books is not restricted, but Indonesia is not a part of this "common economic market." Third, the cost of printing in Indonesia is cheaper than anywhere else in the Malay-Indonesian world, a fact which encourages export and discourages import of printed materials. Fourth, for the sake of "national security," the Indonesian government has imposed very strict regulations on outside books and other printed materials. For books to get into Indonesia, strict government requirements must be met.

Language is another important factor in the Qur'anic commentaries. The Malay language is widely spoken by the Indonesian people. Nevertheless, Javanese and Sundanese are both spoken in some parts of Indonesia, especially in West Java and central Java, respectively. Demographically, Malay is spoken in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, Southern Thailand, and the Southern Philippines. In addition to the Malay language, the Thai language is also used for writing *tafsīr* for the benefit of Thai-speaking Muslims.¹⁰⁰

In Thailand the government's concern with controlling the Muslim population has direct implications for the Qur'anic commentaries. Muslims who are living in the southern provinces readily receive materials from Malaysia

written in the Malay language and Jawi script. As a balance for the Islamic materials flowing from this Malaysian connection, the Thai government has encouraged the publication of Islamic books in Thai. This effort at acculturation by Thai authorities seems to have some impact. This can be seen from the increasing numbers of government-designed curriculums which is in Thai have been implemented in religious schools. The new curriculums are designed to replace those from Middle Eastern countries or Malaysia. As a result, some *tafsīrs* in Thai have appeared. This phenomenon, however, can be considered a positive development only if it is not intended to create hegemony of Thai over Islam and Malay culture. As I myself am a product of that system, I feel that the process of "Siamization" is actually well underway.

These *tafsīrs* written by the Malay-Indonesian scholars are in print in one country or another in the Malay-Indonesian world. Some are widely used; others are not. Their production is motivated by many different factors ranging from personal inclination to full government sponsorship. They are heavily dependent on the Arabic and standard *tafsīrs*. Still, many works have adopted indigenous materials quite well. By any measure, these works have performed a great service to the Muslims in that area, allowing them to find textual authority for their beliefs.

Concluding Remarks

A careful study of the development of Qur'anic exegesis in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago reveals that it has gone through the following stages: first, the Qur'ān was read with emphasis given to the correct reading, *tajwīd*. This is due to the fact that other Islamic sciences such as *fiqh*, *uṣūl al-dīn* and *taṣawwuf* were introduced before the science of Qur'ān. This was the case because of the urgency for knowledge of proper Muslim life. i.e. they were needed for the day-to-day life of Muslim such as theology and jurisprudence. Second, the Qur'ān was taught to the people and translated into the Malay language orally; hence we do not have written records of developments in the period prior to the sixteenth century. Third, some Qur'anic verses were used to explain religious issues, especially questions about God and His attributes. One classic example of this is the work of Hamzah Fansūrī in which verses of the Qur'ān are used in poems to speak of God in a mystical way. This stage of development lies in the period of Hamzah and Shams al-Dīn, two of the most popular but also controversial figures for contemporary scholars. Fourth, this was the period of translation of the Qur'ān and classical Arabic Qur'anic commentaries, in which the Qur'ān and *tafsīr* were finally produced in the Malay-Indonesian language. The period from the seventeenth century onward marks the effective beginning of Qur'anic commentary in the Malay-Indonesian world. The

first *tafsīr* to appear in Malay-Indonesian language was written by 'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Sinkilī. Finally, in the twentieth century we come to the period of Malay Qur'anic commentaries written by Malay-Indonesian scholars in the Malay-Indonesian language. The twentieth century has been by far the most productive century for Qur'anic commentaries in the vernacular, whether Malay-Indonesian, Javanese, or (exceptionally) Thai.

In this development through different periods, one thing has remained unchanged, or changed little: the dependency upon classical and Arabic *tafsīrs*. This dependency is critical, because it suggests that Malay scholars lacked creativity. However, if we allow the argument that all translations are original works, then Malay scholars were indeed creative and original. In an ever-changing world, every country has its own peculiarities, and therefore, a different approach is needed. If a body of *tafsīr* literature represents the prevailing thinking of a time and place, it should be taken seriously, whatever its nature. The modern *tafsīr* of the Malay-Indonesian archipelago is just such an example, for it is distinctively Malay. The *Tafsīr al-Azhar* of Hamka, the *tafsīr* of al-Siddieqi and a few other modern Qur'anic commentaries produced in the Malay-Indonesian world are outstanding examples of truly native *tafsīr*. Qur'anic commentary has always sought to offer textual legitimation,

one way or the other, for a dogma or a personal inclination. Malay-Indonesian scholars have also endeavored to interpret the Qur'ān in light of current events. This did not entail reinterpretation of the Qur'ān, since Malay scholars innerited the common understanding of the context of the revelation. Some Malay-Indonesian scholars, especially those of the modern period, believe that a "new understanding" of the Qur'ān must be based on the essence, not the literal form of the verses addressed to the Prophet and his community at that time. They maintained that, while interpretation of the literal form might be different from one culture to another or from one place to another, the essence, or the real meaning, is applicable in all circumstances.

The study of Qur'anic exegesis in this part of the Muslim world is still in its infancy, and there is a tremendous task ahead. Many manuscripts in collections in European countries as well as in Southeast Asian countries remain to be studied; some are not directly related to Qur'anic commentary but remain useful for assembling the historical puzzle. A careful study of these manuscripts could change the entire landscape.

ENDNOTES

1. In the earliest literary evidence available, the *Sejarah Melayu* (the Malay Annals), believed to have been written in the sixteenth century, some theological issues appear. For example, the issue of whether those in paradise and hell remain permanently therein is discussed. The *Sejarah Melayu* also reports that a book on theology dealing with the Essence, Attributes, and Acts of God was received by Sulṭān Mansūr Shah of Malacca from Makkah. The book was not understood by the people in Malacca and was therefore sent to Pasai for translation and explanation. The same source also records that famous saints of Java, Sunan Bonang and Sunan Giri visited Malacca to study theology. Elsewhere in *Sejarah Melayu* it is related that the Arabic word *makhdūm* (religious teachers or Sufi masters) was used to indicate a technical meaning in mysticism. This implies that mysticism, as many scholars have argued, may well have been the most important single factor in the spread of Islam. See Osman bin Bakar, "Sufism in the Malay-Indonesian World" in *Islamic Spirituality: Manifestations* (New York : Crossroad, 1991), pp. 265-6. See also Sir Richard Winstedt "The Coming of Islam and Islamic Literature," *JMBRAS*, 31 (1958): p. 58.
2. A.H. Johns, "Quranic Exegesis of Malay World: In Search of a Profile," in *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'an* ed. Andrew Rippin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 258-59.
3. Ibid.
4. This situation was well recorded during the height of intellectual development in Aceh, where Malay '*ulamā*' had long written their books and treatises in the Malay-Indonesian language.
5. Only a few facts are known about Fansuri's life. He was of Indian descent, from Gujerat. He is also known to have visited Ayutya-then the capital of Thailand, Java, and Makkah. He was an exponent of Ibn 'Arabī's mystical philosophy and a member of the twelve *tariqahs*. The dates of his birth and death are matters of conjecture. There are at least two widely contested opinions. According to Hurgronje, Hamzah lived in the second part of sixteenth century. This idea is discerned from the life of Shams al-Dīn (d.1630), a

follower who propagated Hamzah's ideas of *wujūdiyyah*; therefore, Hamzah is considered to belong to an earlier generation. (See G.W.J. Drewes and L.F. Brakel, *The Poems of Hamzah Fansuri* [Leiden: Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-Land-en Volkenkunde, 1986], p. 3.) In contrast, Kraemer believes that Hamzah lived in the seventeenth century, for Hamzah was a contemporary and not a predecessor of Shams al-Dīn. Therefore, Hamzah would have been alive sometime after 1636. (Kraemer, *Een Javaansche Primbon uit de Zestiende Eeuw*, [Leiden, 1921], pp. 26-7 as quoted in Drewes and Brakel, *The Poems of Hamzah*, p. 3.) This idea is accepted by Winstedt, Doorenbos and Harun Hadiwijono. Voorhoeve, who studied the poems of Hamzah, reconfirms Hurgronje's idea that Hamzah's lifetime may have fallen in the second half of the sixteenth century. This opinion is supported by Drewes (see Drewes "Hamzah" in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, New edition, p. 155; G.W.J. Drewes and L.F. Brakel, *The Poems of Hamzah Fansuri*, p. 3.) Somewhat in agreement with Hurgronje and Voorhoeve, al-Attas specifies that Hamzah could have been alive in 1604, since at the end of the poem Hamzah informs us that he wrote it during the reign of *raja 'arif lagi mukammal* (learned and unblemish king), who is assumed to be Sultan 'Alā'uddīn Ri'āyat Shah (1589-1604). (See Al-Attas, *The Mysticism of Hamzah Fansuri* [Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1970], pp. 13-14.)

6. Karel Steenbrink, "Qur'ān Interpretations of Hamzah Fansuri (ca. 1600) and Hamka (1908-1982): A Comparison," *Studia Islamika* vol. 2, no. 2 (1995): p. 79.

7. Ibid.

8. This translation is quoted from Yusuf 'Ālī, *The Holy Qur'an: English Translation of the Meanings and Commentary* (Al-Madinah: King Fahd Holy Qur'an Printing Complex, 1411 H.)

9. Al-Attas, *The Mysticism of Hamzah*, p. 449.

10. Ibid., p. 461.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid., p. 368.

13. K. Steenbrink, "Qur'ān Interpretations," p. 80.

14. Al-Attas, *The Mysticism of Hamzah*, pp. 436-37.

15. J. Doorenbos, *De Geshcriften Van Hamzah Pansuri* (Leiden, 1933). A new edition of the poem in English can be found in G.W.J. Drewes and L.F. Brakel, *The Poems of Hamzah Fansuri*,

pp. 42-100. For the Qur'anic quotations in the original Arabic form and the usage of Arabic words, see *Poems of Hamzah*, 175-78; 173-175. L.F. Brakel also has done a study of the usage of Qur'anic verses in the writings of Hamzah. See "Qur'anic Quotations in the Poetry of Hamzah Pansuri," Paper delivered to the International Congress for the Study of the Qur'an, ANU.

16. See A.H. Johns, "Aspects of Sufi Thought in India and Indonesia in the First Half of the 17th Century," *JMBRAS* 28, I (1955): pp. 72-7.

17. A.H. Johns, "Qur'anic Exegesis," p. 261.

18. Ibid., p. 261. Colonialism preserved many important pieces of historical records and manuscripts that might otherwise have perished. But this does not justify, by any means, the colonialists' actions. The colonialists took whatever was valuable for their own self-interest.

19. al-Attas, *The Mysticism of Hamzah*, p. 270.

20. Van Nieuwenhuijze, *Shamsu'l-Din Van Pasai* (Leiden: Brill, 1945), 36 as quoted by Peter Riddell, "Transferring a Tradition," p. 34.

21. Scholars such as A.H. Johns and P. Riddell are among those who subscribe to this idea. See A.H. Johns, "Qur'anic Exegesis," p. 263; P. Riddell, "Transferring Tradition," p. 34.

22. P. Riddell, "Earliest Quranic Exegetical Activity in Malay-speaking States," *Archipel* 38 (1989): pp. 107-24.

23. Van Ronkel, "An Account of Six Malay Manuscripts of the Cambridge University Library," *BKI* XLVI (1896): p. 2ff.

24. P. Riddell, "Earliest Exegetical Activity," p. 114.

25. This first part of the quotation is a translation of the verse 18:9. The translation in Yusuf 'Alī reads:

Or dost thou think that the Companions of the Cave
and of the inscription were wonders among Our
signs?

26. This text was originally written in the Jawi script. For the romanized text and translation with some alterations see P. Riddell, "Earliest Exegetical Activity," pp. 114, 121.

27. A.H. Johns, "Qur'anic Exegesis," p. 251; P. Riddell, "Earliest Exegetical Activity," p. 120.

28. A.H. Johns, "Qur'anic Exegesis," p. 251-52 and P. Riddell, "Earliest Exegetical Activity," p. 120.

29. A.H. Johns, "Qur'anic Exegesis," pp. 251-262 and P. Riddell, "Earliest Exegetical Activity," p. 120.

30. In this regard, one of the classic records about the caliber of Hamzah and Shams al-Dīn outside the realm of scholarship was a report by Sir James Lancaster, the British special envoy to Aceh in 1011/1602, who described the negotiations of treaties for peace and friendship between England and Aceh with two dignitaries appointed by the Sultān 'Alā al-Dīn Ri'āyāt Shah:

One of these noblemen was the chief bishop of the realm, a man of great estimation with the king and all the people; and so he well deserved, for he was a man very wise and temperate. The other was one of the most ancient nobilities, a man of very good gravities but not so fit to enter into these conferences as the bishop was ... And all the conferences passed in the Arabic tongue, which both the bishop and the other nobleman well understood. (James Lancaster, *The Voyages of Sir James Lancaster to Brazil and the East Indies* ed. Sir William Foster [London: The Hakluyt Society, 1940], p. 96.)

Scholars however, are in disagreement with regard to the identity of this "chief bishop". Schrieke, in his book *Indonesian Sociological Studies* ([The Hague & Bandung: Van Hoeve, 1955], pp. II, 243 and Hasjmi in his *Kebudayaan Aceh dalam Sejarah* [Jakarta: Beuna, 1983], pp. 195-7) maintain that the chief bishop was Hamzah al-Fansūrī, as at that time he had already gained prominence. On the other hand, Van Nieuwenhijze in his book *Samsu'l-Din van Pasai: Bijdrage tot de kennis der Sumatraansche Mystiek* ([Leiden: Brill, 1945], pp. 19-20, 234-5) and Iskandar in his book *De Hikayat Atceh* ([s-Gravenhage: H.L. Smoith, 1959], pp. 137, 153, 168) as quoted in Azyumardi Azra, "The Transmission of Islamic Reformism to Indonesia: Networks of Middle Eastern and Malay-Indonesian 'Ulama in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries" ([Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1992], p. 348) are of the opinion that the chief bishop was Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrānī. Whatever the case may be, either of them could have been the author of MS li.6.45.

31. Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranīrī was born in Rānīr (modern Randir), an old harbor town on the Gujarat coast of India. He had a Malay mother and a Hadrami immigrant father. Despite the name indicating his birth place, he is generally regarded as a Malay-Indonesian 'ālim. No one knows precisely the date of

his birth, but scholars suggest that the most likely date was toward the end of the sixteenth century. He was one of the great scholars who made his mark during the intellectual zenith of Aceh culture in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He wrote about thirty works on subjects ranging from *kalām* (theology), to *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), to *taṣawwuf* (mysticism). He is reported to have mastered many languages including Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Malay, and Acehnese. See Syed Muhammad Naguib al-Attas, "Raniri and Wujudīyyah of Seventeenth Century Aceh, Singapore," *MBRAS* (1966): p. 12. For a list of his works see "al-Raniri" in *Encyclopedia of Islam*; see also Al-Attas, *A Commentary on the Ḥujjat al-Siddīq of Nūr al-Dīn al-Ranīrī* (Kuala Lumpur: Ministry of Culture, 1986), pp. 1-50; and Azyumardi Azra, "Transmission of Islamic Reformism," p. 367.

32. Al-Attas, "Raniri and Wujudīyyah," p. 89.

33. This translation is my own. I have tried to stay as close to the original Malay text as possible. This is intended to give not only a clear meaning of the verse but also a representation of the level of language in the original Malay text.

34. Al-Attas, *A Commentary on the Ḥujjat al-Ṣiddīq*, p. 397.

35. Ibid., pp. 92-93, 397. The question of the status of Jesus in the Qur'ān is beyond the scope of this study. For a critical study about the concept of Jesus as the son of God as understood in some *tafsīr* literature, see Mahmoud Ayoub, "Jesus the Son of God: A Study of the Terms *Ibn* and *Walad* in the Qur'an and *Tafsīr* Tradition," in Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Wadi Zaydan Haddad, eds., *Christian-Muslim Encounters* (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 1995), pp. 65-81.

36. 'Abd al-Ra'ūf was an 'ulamā' of Singkel, a part of Aceh. He was born in 1620. In about 1640 he arrived in Makkah, and returned to Aceh in 1660. While he was in Makkah he studied under many famous 'ulamā' such as Ibrāhīm al-Kurānī who became his Sufi Shaykh of the Shātāriyyah *tarīqah*. Upon his return to Aceh he was accepted by the people because of his renowned name in Makkah among the Jawi pilgrims. He gained the patronage of the Sultanah Safyat al-Dīn (1641-1675) and remained her religious advisor during the entire period of her rule. 'Abd al-Ra'ūf spent his entire life in the quest of knowledge. He wrote about twenty-two books dealing with *fiqh*, *tafsīr*, *kalām*, and *taṣawwuf* in both the Arabic and Malay languages. Although he wrote in various areas of Islamic sciences, his chief concern was with reconciliation between the *Sharī'ah* and mysticism, in his

own words, between the *zāhir* and *bātin* sciences. Due to his great contributions to the Islamic intellectual tradition in that part of the world, his name is still known in the Malay-Indonesian world today, and the University in Aceh was named after him. See P. Voorhoeve, "'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Sinkili" in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, p. 88. For a list of his writings, see, P. Voorhoeve, *Bayān Tajalli: Bahan-bahan untuk Mengadakan Penyelidikan lebih Mendalam tentang 'Abdurra-uf Sinkel*, trans. Aboe Bakar (Bandar Aceh: PDIA, 1980), pp. 35-53. Cf Hasjmi, "Syekh Abdurrauf Syiah Kuala, Ulama, Negarawan yang Bijaksana," in *Universitas Syiah Kuala Menjelang 20 Tahun* (Medan: Waspada, 1980), pp. 377-8.

37. A.H. Johns, "Islam in the Malay World" in *Islam in Asia*, eds., Raphael Israel & A.H. Johns, vol. 2 (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1984), p. 141.

38. Hasjmi, "Syekh Abdurrauf Syiah Kuala," p. 378.

39. Azyumardi Azra, "The Transmission of Islamic Reformism," pp. 401-402.

40. P. Riddell, "Transferring Tradition", pp. 43, 45, 47.

41. Salman Harun, "Hakikat Tafsir Tarjuman al-Mustafid Karya Syekh Abdurrauf Sinkel" (Ph.D. diss., Institute Agama Islam Negeri, Jakarta, 1988).

42. P. Riddell "The Source of 'Abd al-Ra'uf's *Tarjuman al-Mustafid*" *JMBRAS* 57 (1984): p. 119.

43. P. Riddell, "Earliest Qur'anic Commentary," p. 119.

44. S.C. Hurgronje, *The Achehnese* (Leiden: Brill, 1906), vol. 2, p. 17, note 6.

45. A.H. Johns, "Qur'anic Exegesis," p. 263. See also P. Riddell, "The Sources of *Tarjuman* of 'Abd al-Ra'ūf's *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd*." *JMBRAS*. 57 (1984): p. 112. Later scholars who followed the footsteps of Hurgronje were people such as D.A. Rinkes, *Abdoerraoef Van Sinkel: Bijdrage Tot De Kennis Van De Mystiek Op Sumatra En Java*, Heerenveen, 1909, pp. 31-32; Voorhoeve "Bayan Tajalli," *TBG*, vol. 85 (1952): p. 110.

46. The translations of the passages are my own.

47. P. Riddell, "Transferring Tradition," pp. 40-41.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

49. A.H. Johns, "Islam in the Malay World," p. 141.

50. Ibid., p. 144.
51. See P. Riddell, "Transferring Tradition," pp. 67, 68; A.H. Johns, "Islam in the Malay World," pp. 141, 142, 144-145.
52. P. Riddell, "Earliest Exegetical Activity," p. 119. See also A.H. Johns, "Qur'anic Exegesis," pp. 265-6.
53. P. Riddell, "Earliest Exegetical Activity," p. 119.
54. Azyumardi Azra, "Transmission of Islamic Reformism," p. 403-4.
55. Riddell, "Early Malay Commentary," p. 119. See also A.H. Johns, "Qur'anic Exegesis," p. 265.
56. A.H. Johns, "Islam in the Malay World," p. 128.
57. Ibid.
58. A.H. Johns, "Qur'anic Exegesis," p. 267, see also R.O Winstedt, "A History of Malay Literature," *JMBRAS* 27 (1939), Part 9, p. 103.
59. A.H. Johns, "Islam in the Malay World," pp. 127-28.
60. A.H. Hill, ed. and trans., *The Hikayat Abdullah-- Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford in Asia, 1970), pp. 54-56.
61. Patani under Thai authority has been divided into four provinces: Patani, Yala, Narathiwat, and Satun. Historically, in 1786-91, The Patani government had failed to resist the power of Siam and thus fell under Siamese rule. The complete annexation of Patani into Siam (Thailand) occurred in the nineteenth century. In 1967 Muslim independence movements appeared as a response to Siamese colonial settlement in Muslim provinces. The Siamese government has allowed very limited areas of self-government, chiefly in the area of Islamic family law and adat (customary law).
62. No specific date of birth is recorded for Shaykh Dāwūd, but since his first work was completed in 1810, he must have been born in the late eighteenth century. His biography is now in print, prepared by a grandson of his brother, H.W.M. Shaghir Abdullah, *Sheikh Daud bin 'Abdullah al-Fatani, 'Ulama' dan Pengarang Terulung Asia Tenggara* (Shaykh Dāwūd bin 'Abdullah al-Fatāni, a Great Scholar and Famous Author of Southeast Asia) (Shah Alam: Penerbitan Hizbi), 1990.

63. In this regard, it is worth noting the impressive effort by The Pusat Islam (Islamic Center) of Malaysia, located in the capital of Kuala Lumpur, to collect the works of Shaykh Dāwūd al-Faṭṭānī. As of this date the center holds about ninety large and small manuscripts. This endeavor was initiated by H.W.M. Shaghir Abdullah. See Shaghir Abdullah, *Sheikh Daud*, pp. 55-93.
64. P. Voorhoeve, "Dawud," in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, new ed., p. 183. Many of Sheikh Daud's works are listed in V. Metheson & M.B. Hooker, "Jawi Literature in Patani: the Maintenance of an Islamic Tradition," *JMBRAS* 61 (1988): pp. 19-25.
65. For further list of Zain al-'Ābidīn's and Muḥammad Ismā'īl's works see V. Metheson & M.B. Hooker, "Jawi Literature," pp. 33-5.
66. *Ibid.*, pp. 27, 39.
67. See C.S. Hurgronje, *Mekka in the Latter Part of the Nineteenth Century*, trans. J.H. Mohanam (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970), pp. 197-8.
68. *Ibid.*
69. The Prophet is reported has said: "Whoever speaks on the Qur'ān without knowledge let him make his place in Hell." (See Tirmidhī, *Sunan Tirmidhī* (with commentary of Ibn al-'Arabī) vol. 11 [Cairo, 1934], chapter of *tafsīr*, p. 67.) In slightly different wordings Prophet said: "Whoever speaks on the Qur'ān with his opinion even if right, still considered wrong." See al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, p. 68. See also al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā' 'Ulūm wa al-Dīn*, ed., al-Ḥāfiẓ al-'Īrāqī, vol. 3, (Cairo, 1937), p. 136.
70. A.H. Johns, "Islam in the Malay World," pp. 131-32.
71. For a detailed list of Nawawi's writings see S. Hurgronje, *Mekka in the Latter Part*, p. 271.
72. *Ibid.*, 132.
73. *Ibid.*
74. Muḥammad Nawawī al-Jāwī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr li Ma' ālim al-Tanzīl (Marāḥ Labīd)*, 3rd. ed., 2 vols. (Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1955), vol. 1, p. 2.
75. *Ibid.*
76. A.H. Johns, "Qur'anic Exegesis," p. 270.

77. Zafry Zamzam, "Karya Sjeich Nawawi Banten (The Writings of Sheykh Nawawi Banten)," in *Sinar Darussalam* (Acheh) No. 47, (1973): p. 60.
78. *Ibid.*
79. *Al-tafsīr bi al-ma' thūr* is a method of Qur'anic interpretation which makes use of the verses of the Qur'an and traditions of the Prophet to explain the verses of the Qur'an. *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, for example, takes this approach. *Al-tafsīr bi al-ra'y* uses rational reasoning to explicate the verses of the Qur'an; an example is *Tafsīr al-Rāzī*.
80. *Ibid.*
81. A.H. Johns, "Qur'anic Exegesis," p. 275.
82. This exposition is based on a lecture given by Sorkatie on July 25, 1937 at the Jam'iyyah club in Batavia (Jakarta) as quoted in A.H. Johns, "Quranic Exegesis," pp. 276-77.
83. *Isra'īliyyāt* are Jewish midrashic traditions which Jewish converts introduced into *hadīth* and *tafsīr* literature. For the influence of such traditions on Qur'anic exegesis, see Ibn Taymiyah, *Muqaddimah fī Uṣūl al-Tafsīr*, ed. 'Adnān Zarzur (Kuwait: Dār al-Qur'ān al-Karīm, 1971), p. 57.
84. The emphasis on reason makes perfect sense in a time when Muslim were encountering modern European science and technology. Muslim reformists were amazed with the progress and development in Europe and concluded that in order to be able to compete with the European West, reason had to be rejuvenated.
85. Zain al-'Ābidīn bin Aḥmad, "A History of Malay Literature, Modern Developments," *JMBRAS* 27 (1929): p. 155.
86. This journal may have been named after *Jam'iyyāt al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn* (The Society of Muslim Brothers) founded by Hasan al-Banna (who was assassinated in 1949) of Egypt.
87. Zain al-'Ābidīn, "History of Malay Literature," pp. 154-55.
88. To trace the influence of 'Abduh's reform movement in Indonesia see Hamka (Hāji 'Abd al-Malik Karīm Amrullāh), *Pengaruh Muḥammad 'Abduh di Indonesia* (The Influence of Muhammad 'Abduh in Indonesia) (Jakarta: Tintamas, 1961). This pamphlet was originally a speech delivered by Hamka during the conferment of *doctor honoris* by the University of al-Azhar, Egypt on January 12, 1958. It was originally

delivered in Arabic but translated and published in the Malay-Indonesian language. It is a historical delineation of the influence of 'Abduh on the Indonesian scholars. The influence of 'Abduh in the Malay-Indonesian world, according to Hamka, was brought over by the Jāwi (a general and popular name for the Malay-Indonesian pilgrims in Makkah) students and pilgrims. This article is a general exposition of the personalities and thought of the followers of 'Abduh reform ideas. It is also a useful piece of work for delineating 'Abduh's influence as it was transported to the Malay-Indonesian world.

89. See Muṣṭafā Baisa, *Al-Abroor--Tafsīr Djur' 'Ammā* (Surabaya: n.d), pp. 13-15. See also J. Bluhn, "A Preliminary Statement on the Dialogue Established between the Reform Magazine *al-Manār* and the Malayo-Indonesian World," *Indonesian Circle*, Nov. (1983): pp. 35-42.

90. See M. Federspiel "An Introduction to Qur'anic Commentaries in Contemporary Southeast Asia," *The Muslim World*, Vol. LXXXI, no. 2, (1991): pp. 162-64. Since this work was written in the decade before its publication, some additional commentaries might be missing from his list.

91. Ibid., p. 150.

92. See H. Federspiel, "Introduction to Qur'anic Commentaries," pp. 162-4.

93. For examples, see, H. A. Halim Hasan, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Medan: Islamiyyah, 1955), pp. 1-13; see also Department Agama, *Tafsir al-Qur'an dan Terjemahnya* (Jakarta, 1971), pp. 1-10.

94. See H. Federspiel, *Popular Indonesian Literature of the Qur'an* (Ithaca, New York, Southeast Asia Program Cornell University, 1994), pp. 58-61. As for the example, see Ahmad Hasan, *Introduction to Al-Furqān* (Jakarta: Dewan Da'wah Islāmiyyah, 1956), pp. iv-xi.

95. H. Federspiel, *Popular Indonesian Literature*, pp. 61-64.

96. It is a trend now in Qur'anic exegesis to interpret the Qur'ān thematically. This approach starts with the issues, not verses, as the exegetes traditionally do; different verses are discussed in light of their historical perspectives and in relation to specific issues relevant to human life or the universe. Therefore, the ultimate result of this approach is "problem solving," not solely for the sake of interpretation. However, if we probe into this discussion further we will find that the conflict between these two approaches is not genuine. In the final analysis

they compliment each other; the traditional, analytical approach can always be used for the thematic studies. For a detailed discussion of this approach see Muhammad Baqir al-Şadr, "Thematic Approach to Qur'anic Exegesis" in *Al-Tawhīd*, vol. 6, No. 3, pp. 19-21.

97. The analytical approach is a method of *tafsīr* by which the exegete deals with the Qur'ān verse by verse in accordance with the order in the Qur'ān. The explanations of the verses depend on literal meanings, traditions, or other verses that have some words or meanings in common with the verses under study. The objective of this approach is "to understand the meaning of God's words for a large number of people at the beginning of Islamic era." But with the passage of time and the increase in distance from the time of revelation, with new developments and changes in circumstances, the meaning of some words has become obscure. See Baqir al-Şadr, "Thematic Approach to the Qur'anic Exegesis," pp. 17-19.

98. H. Federspeil, "Introduction to Qur'anic Commentaries," p. 154.

99. For instance in the case of Patani, since the arrival of Islam until now the Jawi script has been used to read and write about Islam. However, due to its relative ease of use, the Roman script is also being used. Now its popularity is increasing as a result of textbooks from Malaysia, and because many people from Patani have crossed the border to get their education.

100. These are usually known as Thai-Muslims. The term refers to the group of Muslims living in Thailand who have been thoroughly acculturated and who prefer to speak Thai. This term technically includes two types of people: Malays living in the southern provinces of Thailand who have been assimilated into Thai culture through the educational system, and a second group of immigrant Muslims from the Indo-Pakistani sub-continent who have settled in Thailand. They are culturally Thai but religiously Muslims. One group of Muslims who cannot be included in this category is Malay Muslims who are culturally Malay and religiously Muslims. They are the descendants of the Muslim self-ruling states which existed from the fifteenth century onward until they were invaded by Thailand in the eighteenth century.

CHAPTER 3
THE INTELLECTUAL, SOCIAL, AND POLITICAL
ENVIRONMENT OF TWENTIETH CENTURY
MINANGKABAU

Introductory Remarks

Post-independent Indonesia is facing a period of crisis of self identity. During the early part of the twentieth century many historic events helped shape the emerging identity of Indonesia. The most dominant forces and, in a way, competitive ideologies, have been Islam and nationalism. Hamka appeared during this period in the quest for identity who played a pivotal role in representing Islam in the multi-ethnic and multi-religious society of Indonesia.

In this chapter we will delineate some of the factors that have influenced the intellectual and socio-political currents in Indonesia. These factors helped shape the personality of Hamka. In order to more fully comprehend his thought and to understand where Hamka stands in the intellectual history of Indonesia, these social settings and the other ingredients of Hamka's life must be examined.

Minangkabau in Sumatra is the epicenter of many historic events in the archipelago. It is important for this study not only because it is the birth place of Hamka but also, as Noer puts it, "because of its important role in the spread of reformist ideas to others.... The first sign of

reforms was observed at a time when other areas seemed almost content with their traditional practices."¹ The period under investigation in this chapter has been limited to the twentieth century in order to discern the influence that the nexus of culture and history had on the personality and thought-patterns of Hamka.

Minangkabau in the Twentieth Century

Minangkabau was the birth place of Hamka and many events that shaped and changed the socio-economic-political factors affecting not only the people of Minangkabau but also the people of Indonesia in general. In this section we are interested in locating Hamka in his immediate context in order to identify the factors that influenced his thought and personality. Therefore, we shall look only at Minangkabau, not Indonesia as a whole.

There were at least three big events that contributed to the changing intellectual, social and political landscape of Minangkabau in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: the *Padri* war, the conflict between *Naqshabandiyyah* and *Shāṭiriyyah*, and the Islamic Reform movement which instigated the emergence of the *kaum muda* (young group)-*kaum tua* (traditionalist) conflicts. ²

Padri Movement³

Before we go into detail, the inclusion of the *Padri*, which lies outside the time frame that we have specified, must be explained. The reason is, though the *Padri* movement took place in the early years of the nineteenth century, it began reform among the Muslims of Minangkabau. Its reverberating influence on the Minangkabau social structure was thus of paramount importance. Muslim reform in Minangkabau was not started by Indonesian followers of Muḥammad 'Abduh as generally understood, but rather by the *Padri* movement in 1804. Those who began this movement were the Muslims who wanted to purify Islam from *bid'ah* (religious innovation), widespread in Minangkabau at the time. The origin of the *Padri* movement has been attributed to three famous *hāji* returnees: Hāji Miskīn (returned to Pandai Sikat/Luhak Agam), Hāji 'Abd al-Raḥmān (returned to Piabang/Luhak Lima Puluh), and Haji Muḥammad 'Ārif, also known as Taunku Lintau, (returned to Sumanik/Luhak Tanah Datar). These three *hājīs* reportedly were influenced by the *wahabī* movement which had just conquered Ḥijāz (Makkah and Madīnah).⁴ It became the inspiration for a dynamic force aiming for a drastic transformation of Minangkabau society from what *Padri* followers considered a *jāhiliyyah* (pre-Islamic) society to a fully Islamic one.⁵

The *Padri* movement may have been initiated by the religious leaders, but its success is inconceivable, as

suggested by Schrieke, without the support, direct or indirect, of the non-religious people, the *penghulus* ⁶ and the members of the ruling class of that region.⁷ By 1818 many villages in Minangkabau had come under the *Padri* control; however, in 1818 a group of *penghulus*, led by two royal families who were threatened by the advance of the *Padri*, requested military intervention from the British. A few years later the Dutch became involved further complicating the matter. With the involvement of western powers, the *Padri* war began.⁸

Even though the *Padri* movement did not win the war, its vivid impact on the religious and structural fabric of Minangkabau society is apparent. One of the most significant effects of the *Padri* movement in Minangkabau was "the greater assimilation of religious doctrine within Minangkabau *adat* as the ideal pattern of behavior".⁹ As a result, *adat* was "recodified" to include a more important role for Islam as the system of belief and a basis of behavior. The daily practices of *adat* should be the manifestation of an Islamic way of life: *agamo mangato, adat mamakai* (religion designs, *adat* applies).¹⁰ The harmonious relation between *adat* and Islam within the newly codified Minangkabau social system, as suggested by Taufik Abdullah, is symbolized in the architectural style of the mosque in Minangkabau. In Minangkabau, the roofs of mosques are divided into three stories, symbolizing the three social

groups according to *adat*: the *penghulus*, the *imām-khatīb* (religious dignitaries), and the masses.¹¹

In the post-*Padri* era, Islam was further woven into the social fabric of Minangkabau. This may be inferred from the mushrooming numbers of religious schools in different places around Minangkabau, and in the increased prestige of the religious teachers, which was far greater than that of the "native chiefs".¹² A new aphorism on the relationship between *adat* and religion was introduced. The old aphorism of *adat* Minangkabau was "*tak lekang dek panas tak lapuk dek hujan*" ([*adat*] is not shrunk by the heat, and not decayed by the rain); this was replaced by "*adat bersendikan shara' , shara' bersendikan Kitabullah*" (*adat* is based on Islamic law, and Islamic law is based on the book of God [al-Qur'ān]).¹³

The *Padri* movement also helped shape the Dutch perception of Islam. Since the large-scale resistance to Dutch colonial rule was headed by Indonesian *hājīs*, they were made the number-one enemy of the Dutch. From the desire to control Indonesian resistance, the Dutch colonial authority established a consulate in Jeddah in 1872.¹⁴ This was aimed specifically at monitoring Indonesian *hājīs*. S. Hurgronje, the famous Islamic advisor to the Dutch colonial government, reported that he was sent to Arabia to

become intimately acquainted with the daily life of the Mekkans and of the thousands of Muhammadans from all parts of the world living in Mekkah [...]
Being a Dutchman, I took special interest in the

colony, counting many thousands of Jawah, as the Mekkans call the people of the East Indies archipelago.¹⁵

Upon his return, Hurgronje devised new policies to assist the Dutch in their efforts to curtail the influence of Arabian and Middle-eastern Islam on Indonesia.

The suspicion felt by the Dutch for the *hājīs* can also be discerned in the writings of Christian missionaries in Java:

Arabia not only constitutes the uniting centre for devoted pilgrims, but politicians and leaders of various Muslim peoples meet there and also discuss their political interests and plans; there consultations and counsel take place, and the returning pilgrims are supplied with tracts for religious stimulation...¹⁶

As a result of these concerns, the Dutch attempted to limit the number of pilgrims by applying several restrictive measures, such as requiring the payment of a substantial amount of money to obtain a pilgrimage travel permit. Though this rule was rescinded in 1852, it was later replaced by other ordinances restricting the movement of *hājīs* upon their return from Makkah.¹⁷

The *Shāṭiriyyah*-*Naqshabandiyyah* Conflicts

After the crisis caused by the *Padri* movement started to die down, new trouble erupted. In the decade following 1850, the *Naqshabandiyyah ṭarīqat* began to denounce the old *ṭarīqat*, especially the *Shāṭiriyyah*, accusing them of

heresy.¹⁸ This conflict is reminiscent of the famous and oft-recounted struggle in Aceh between Hamzah Fansūrī and his friend and student Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrānī on one hand, and al-Ranīrī on the other.¹⁹ Indeed, the conflict in Minangkabau was an extension of that previous conflict in Aceh, as well as in India and the Middle East in the eighteenth century.

The main cause of conflict was that the *Shāṭiriyyah ṭarīqat* believed in the mystical concept of the unity of all being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) as propounded by Ibn 'Arabi.²⁰ The *Naqshabandiyyah* on the other hand, believed in the *waḥdat al-shuhūd* (cognitive unity of being)²¹ which was propounded by Ahmad Sirhindi (1564-1624). In Minangkabau, these two *ṭarīqats* were also known as *agama Cangking dan agama Ulakan*, the Religion of Cangking and the Religion of Ulakan, named after the places in which each was first introduced to Minangkabau: the *Shāṭiriyyah ṭarīqat* in Ulakan and *Naqshabandiyyah ṭarīqat* in Cangking.²²

The different doctrines followed by the two centers led to the rise of conflict between them. The conflict had a far reaching impact on the religious life of the people in that area, as Sufism had a strong hold in Minangkabau. Consequently, most of the 'ulamā have been concerned only with Sufism in such a way that Islam has been reduced to nothing more than Sufism.²³

However, according to Hurgronje's observation of the Acehnese society in the nineteenth century, the unorthodoxy of the *Shāṭiriyyah* in Indonesia was well known. The "Indonesian adherents have been so long left to themselves" and was "enough to account for the creeping-in of all manner of impurities into the tradition".²⁴ These local practices and beliefs, which might have been influenced by Hinduism and animism, were put into the mouth of the founder. This conflict further polarized Minangkabau society which in the past had been influenced by the conflict between *adat* and non-*adat*.²⁵

This conflict between the *ṭariqats* in Minangkabau reached its peak in early twentieth century, when the *Naqshabandiyyah* denounced the *Shāṭiriyyah* as heretical in its belief, particularly, in the doctrine of *waḥdat al-wujūd*.²⁶ At the turn of the twentieth century, the conflict deepened further when a new Islamic reformist movement emerged. This movement, headed by Aḥmad Khatīb, not only attacked the prevalent religious and *adat* practices but also denounced the mystical brotherhoods, especially the *Naqshabandiyyah*, as unorthodox. Aḥmad Khatīb's main contention centered around five points, namely: *silsilah* (geneological tree) of the *Naqshabandiyyah*, the *bid'ah* (innovation), misinterpretation of verses of the Qur'ān, the *dhikr* (remembering Allah by uttering His name or His

attributes), and the *sulūk* (way, journeying on the mystical path).²⁷

Muslim Reform Movements

As mentioned briefly in the previous section, the *Padri* movement was the earliest prelude to Islamic reformism in Minangkabau. The second wave of modern reform came through the well-known Egyptian Muslim reformer Muḥammad 'Abduh. 'Abduh's reform ideas were brought to Indonesia by at least two means: by students who studied in Egypt and through 'Abduh's writings. His reform ideas were widely debated by scholars in regard to their nature and orientation. J.L. Peacock views them as "puritanical" ideas that preach scripturalism, calling the Muslims of Indonesia to return to the original sources of Islam, the Qur'ān and the traditions of the Prophet, and bypassing the commentaries of scholars.²⁸ As a result, the slogan, "*kembali kepada al-Qur'ān dan al-Sunnah*" (return to the Qur'ān and the authentic traditions of the Prophet) is used widely in Indonesia.²⁹ These reform ideas ignited a militant movement in Indonesia intended to be aggressive in its approach. However, the overall struggle of the Islamic reform movement in Indonesia centered around two primary themes: educational, cultural and, social reform on one hand; and political reform on the other.³⁰

The second wave of reform in Minangkabau was started by at least four students of Shaykh Aḥmad Khātīb, three of whom were from Minangkabau, Shaykh Muḥammad Jamīl Jambek, Hāji 'Abd al-Karīm Amrullāh (Hamka's father), and Hāji 'Abd al-lāh Aḥmad, as well as a student from Java, Kiyai Hāji Aḥmad Dahlan, the founder of the Muhammadiyah society.³¹

Shaykh Aḥmad Khatīb (1855-1916)

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Shaykh Aḥmad Khatīb³² was a famous *imām* (prayer leader) of the Shāfi'ī *madhhab* (school of jurisprudence) in *Masjid al-Ḥarām* in Makkah. He was not directly involved in the reform movement in Minangkabau, as he spent most of his life learning and teaching in Makkah. However, he disseminated his reform ideas through his students and Indonesian pilgrims to the holy city. Aḥmad Khatīb's reform ideas were not in line with those of 'Abduh, as the former followed Shāfi'ī school of *fiqh* while the latter was not affiliated with one particular *madhhab*. 'Abduh was a man of broad and comprehensive ideas, but he was also shaykh al-Azhar. Although Aḥmad Khatīb wrote a treatise refuting 'Abduh's reform ideas, he nonetheless allowed his students to read 'Abduh's writings, such as those that appeared in *al-'Urwah al-Wuthqā* (The Indissoluble Bond)³³ and *Tafsīr al-Manār*.³⁴

In his reform ideas, Aḥmad Khatīb was up against two dominant practices: the practice of *adat*, especially in the area of the law of inheritance which was not in line with the Islamic law of inheritance, and the *ṭarīqat Naqshabandiyah*.³⁵ Aḥmad Khatīb denounced all mystical brotherhoods, especially the *Naqshabandiyyah*, as unorthodox and therefore heretical. One particular target of his criticism was the practice of *rābiṭah*.³⁶ These criticisms can be found in his book *Izhār Zughal li al-Kāzibīn fi Tashabbuhihim bi al-Ṣādiqīn* (Displaying the Deviation of the Liars for their Resemblance with the Honest) written in 1906. However, these criticisms against *ṭarīqat Naqshabandiyyah* by scholars of Minangkabau can be traced back to Ibn Taymiyyah, author of *Tawaṣṣul wa al-Wāṣilah* (Intercession and Intercessor), who criticized *rābiṭah* and *wāṣilah*.³⁷ These two practices would later become common targets for all Muslim reformers in Minangkabau society.

Shaykh Muhammad Tāhir Jalāluddīn (1869-1956)

The second figure to propagate modern reformist ideas in Minangkabau was Shaykh Tāhir Jalāluddīn. He was born in Ampek Angket, Bukittinggi, Minangkabau, in 1869 and died in Malaysia in 1956. He spent most of his student life in Makkah. He visited Minangkabau twice in 1923 and again in 1927. On his second trip he was detained by the Dutch

authorities for six months. When he was released, he went back to Malaya, and never returned.³⁸

Though he made only these two brief return visits to Minangkabau, Shaykh Jalāluddīn was well-known and respected there, especially through his periodical *al-Imām* (The Leader), which was widely circulated in Minangkabau by his friends and students from Makkah. He, together with Rāja 'Ālī bin Ahmad, established a school, *al-Iqbal al-Islāmiyah*, in Singapore in 1908 to propagate reformist ideas. The school later moved to Riau for financial reasons. A similar school, the *Adābiyyah* school, was established in Padang by his colleague, 'Abdullāh Ahmad, using *al-Iqbal al-Islāmiyyah* as a model.³⁹

Shaykh Jalāluddīn's reform ideas were published in *al-Imām*, the first issue of which appeared in 1906, containing articles regarding popular knowledge and issues related to the Muslim world, as well as religious questions. In his many articles he urged Muslims to be more progressive and dynamic and not to be left behind by the West. *Al-Imām* was in many ways the Malay version of *al-Manār*, as the latter was frequently cited in the pages of *al-Imām*.⁴⁰ In *al-Imām*, Sufi orders, especially *Naqshabandiyyah* were severely criticized and accused of being the cause of backwardness and *bid'ah* (religious innovation) in Minangkabau. He, like many other modern reformers, rejected the practice of *taqlīd* (following the established judgement) in *fiqh* (Islamic

Jurisprudence). Instead he resorted directly to the Qur'ān and prophetic tradition (*Sunnah*), thus bypassing the traditional *fiqh* books.⁴¹

Al-Imām quickly became a popular source for reformists and other like-minded people. Its popularity drew the attention of the Dutch authorities, and his friend Hāji 'Abdullāh Aḥmad republished it in Padang under the name *al-Munīr* (The Illuminated) in order to avoid Dutch monitoring.⁴² Therefore, 'Abduh's reformist ideas found their way to Minangkabau through periodicals published by 'Abduh, and through indirect dissemination by local publications like *al-Imām*, and *al-Munīr*.⁴³

Shaykh Muhammad Jamīl Jambek (1860-1947)

The third figure who was responsible for the impetus for reform in Minangkabau was Shaykh Muḥammad Jamīl Jambek (born and died in Bukittinggi). Shaykh Jambek was not from a religious family but from a family of *adat* dignitaries. He was not given a religious education. His primary school education prepared him to go to a Teacher Training College. However, he did not complete his education because he was attracted to the *parewa*⁴⁴ life.

Shaykh Jambek began to study Islam seriously when he was twenty-two years of age. In 1896 he went to Makkah and stayed there for nine years, studying Islam. He returned from Makkah in 1903 and started teaching along the

traditional lines. Soon after that he gave up teaching and again led the *parewa* life, during which he gave talks and lectures, especially on the topic of enrichment of faith. Though Shaykh Jambek did not write much, he occasionally contributed articles to *al-Munīr*.

One area in which he excelled was *'ilm al-Falak* (Astronomy) by which the times for prayer and the beginning and the end of *Ramaḍān* are determined. This expertise was, however, very much at odds with traditional practice which relied on citing the crescent for the beginning and end of the month of *Ramaḍān*. As recorded in his autobiography, Jambek did not associate directly with any particular reform groups in Minangkabau; his contribution to reform movements was lending of support through the education of the populace.⁴⁵

'Abd al-Karīm Amrullāh (1879-1945)

Another important figure who was influential in the reform movement in Minangkabau was Hāji 'Abd al-Karīm Amrullāh (Hāji Rasūl). He was born and brought up in an *'ulamā* family of Minangkabau. After receiving his elementary education, he went to Makkah in 1894, where he studied for seven years. He then returned to Minangkabau but not for long. He went to Makkah again and started teaching there. In 1906 he returned to Minangkabau for the second time and started teaching in various places around

Minangkabau. He was an uncompromising man. His approach, as described by Noer, was "harsh, unforgiving and unrelenting."⁴⁶ In his public religious lectures, he would criticize severely all practices which, in his view, were against Islamic teachings; he would not spare even minor issues.⁴⁷

Though 'Abd al-Karīm was from a religious family whose members maintained a harmonious relationship with *adat* authorities in order to fit into Minangkabau society, he himself was hostile to *adat* practices and criticized the proponents of *adat*. His reform ideas aimed to purify Islam from innovation (*bid'ah*). He was also hostile to the practices of *ṭarīqah*, especially the Sufi concepts of *rābiṭah* (the bond with the shaykh) and *waṣīlah* (shaykh as intercessor with God). To voice his opposition to such practices and ideas 'Abd al-Karīm wrote a polemical book, *Qāti' al-Razbi al-Mulhidīn* (The Cutter of the Throat of the Atheists). This work aimed to refute Sayyed Sa'īd Munka, a traditional 'ālim, who was reported to have written *al-Āyāt al-Bayyinah li al-Munṣifīn fī Izālah Khurafāt ba'ḍi 'Āshibīn* (The Clear Signs for the Repenters to Wipe Out the Superstitions from Some of the Zealots), a work defending the practices of *rābiṭah* and *tawaṣṣul* in *ṭarīqah Naqshabandiyah*.⁴⁸

'Abd al-Karīm travelled widely during his lifetime, including trips to Malaya (Malaysia) and Java. His trip to

Java yielded tremendous benefits for his reform struggle, as he met the like-minded 'ulamā, Ahmad Dahlan, the founder of the Muhammadiyah, with whom he was greatly impressed. In 1925 he introduced Muhammadiyah to Minangkabau, which proved fertile soil, and it rapidly spread there. In later years Minangkabau became an important center for Muhammadiyah activities and propaganda.⁴⁹ His own son, Hamka, became a great propagandist of the Muhammadiyah.

'Abd al-Karīm's ideas were translated into practical, educational and institutional reforms. His old *Surau Jambatan Besi*⁵⁰ in Pandang Panjang grew into a reformist school, *Sumatra Thawālib*⁵¹, some of whose students were responsible for originating the Muslim political party *Persatuan Muslimin Indonesia*.⁵² 'Abd al-Karīm was an advisor to the *Persatuan Guru-guru Agama Islam* (Union of Muslim Religious Teachers) in 1920. He also fought against Communism in 1920. In 1928 he opposed the *Guru-ordonnantie* (teacher ordinance).⁵³ As a result of his strong opposition and his uncompromizing approach, he was detained in 1941 by Dutch authorities who exiled him to Sukabumi. His biographer, who incidentally was his son, reported that "the authorities of the local government as well as *adat* laws could not function in the area in which he lived." ⁵⁴

Hāji 'Abdullāh Aḥmad (1878-1933)

The final figure responsible for the reform movement in Minangkabau was Hāji 'Abdullāh Aḥmad, whose father was an 'ālim and textile trader. He received his early education in a government school and his religious education at home. In 1895 he went to Makkah, and after four years in Makkah studying religion, he returned to Minangkabau. He took up teaching in Pandang Panjang, and attacked *ṭarīqat* and *bid'ah*. Hāji 'Abdullāh had a special interest in publishing which he used to the fullest extent to propagate reform ideas. He established *al-Munīr* (published in Padang from 1910-15) a monthly newsmagazine modelled after the *al-Imām* of Shaykh Jalāluddīn, and *al-Akhbar* (1913). He was also the religious editor of the *Sarekat Islām* periodical, *al-Islām* (1916). In 1926 he received an honorary degree in Religion from Cairo.⁵⁵

In addition, these reform ideas were picked up by Arab descendants in Indonesia. As a result, a religious-social organization, *Jam'iyāt al-Khair*, was founded in 1905.⁵⁶ The reformist type of publication also emerged in Singapore in 1906 under the title *al-Imām*, published by Shaykh Muḥammad bin Sālī and Shaykh Ṭāhir Jalāluddīn. These two figures, especially the latter, together with Aḥmad Khatīb, who had just returned from Makkah, also published their reform ideas in *al-Munīr* in 1911. It should be noted, however, that most of the readers were young 'ulamā' from West Sumatra. One of

them was 'Abd al-Karīm Amrullāh, Hamka's father. From a very young age, then, Hamka already lived in the circle of reform groups and the social rubric created by his father. These reform ideas resulted in great conflicts with the traditional 'ulamā' and adat authorities.

There were many other reformists who in one way or another supported and upheld these reform ideas. It is not possible, however, to discuss all these ideas in this study. It must suffice in this chapter only to mention a few other important names: Shaykh Ibrāhīm Mūsā (1882-ca 1945)⁵⁷, Zaynuddīn Labai al-Junūsī (1890-1924)⁵⁸, and Aḥmad Sorkattī (1872-1943).⁵⁹

Sumatra Tawālib

To describe the educational climate during Hamka's life time, some understanding of Sumatra Tawālib is deemed necessary. This educational institution was among the institutions attended by Hamka early in his life; therefore, it certainly influenced his personality and thought patterns significantly.

The Sumatra Tawālib in Pandang Panjang grew out of Surau Jembatan Besi, a traditional-style *madrasah*⁶⁰ which normally stressed traditional Islamic subjects such as *sharī'ah* (Islamic law), *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), and *kalām* (theology). As is the usual practice in the traditional Islamic educational system, the school was dominated by one teacher: *Surau Jembatan Besi* was under the

supervision of Hāji 'Abd al-Karīm Amrullāh. In 1918, as part of the process of modernization, Hāji 'Abd al-Karīm introduced the graded class system into the school. Slowly but surely, other aspects of the school, such as the textbooks and the curriculum, were modernized. A student organization and a school board were also introduced. These changes resulted in moving from a school controlled by one man to a democratic school in which many decisions were made by the school board.⁶¹

The student organization at *Surau Jembatan Besi*, however, can be dated back to 1916 when one of the students, Hāji Habīb, took the initiative to organize a student cooperative society. Its main objective was to meet the simple, daily needs of the students, including soap, books, pencils, and ink. Because one of the cooperative's earliest activities was supplying soap to the students, the organization is known as the *Perkumpulan Sabun* (Soap Association).⁶² In 1917, inspired by the *Jong Sumatranen Bond* (JSB, Young Sumatran Union), the *Perkumpulan Sabun* expanded its goals to supply all the needs of the students, which included haircuts, tailoring, laundry, and other needs. This new, enlarged organization in Pandang Panjang was called *Sumatra Tuwailib* (Students of Sumatra), and was put under the administration of the school board, whose members consisted of school alumni, junior teachers, and local traders. In 1920, *Sumatra Tawālib* (the General

Organization of Students of Sumatra) was born when a reform school in Parabek, which also had established a students organization, joined the association. Consequently, *madrasah* in surrounding villages also joined the organization and renamed their schools *Sumatra Ṭawālib*. In order to look after the member schools, a central board for the *Sumatra Ṭawālib* schools was established.⁶³

In the advanced phase of the schools' development, non-religious subjects began to be introduced. Subjects like geography and history were taught, though the main emphasis remained on the Islamic sciences. In addition, books by such reformers such as Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Al-Qayyim, Muḥammad 'Abduh and Rashīd Riḍā were used, and ultimately *Sumatra Ṭawālib* schools became full-fledged reformist schools in which reformist ideas were actively studied.

In 1922 political activities started to creep into the schools, reaching the high water mark when Datuk Bantuah introduced Communism to the students. Subsequently, this created divisions among the students and teachers, and in turn the school became an ideological battle field between Islam and Communism.⁶⁴ This development was carefully monitored by the Dutch government, leading to the arrest of Datuk Bantuah. The arrest of the Communist spiritual leader led to the decline of the school. In 1926, an earthquake completely destroyed the school building. After it was

rebuilt in 1928, the school reemerged as an intellectual center in Minangkabau.⁶⁵

The Muhammadiyah

The Muhammadiyah was founded on 18 November, 1912, in Yogyakarta by Kiyai Hāji Aḥmad Dahlan (his name after returning from Makkah; his original name was Muḥammad Darwis).⁶⁶ According to his biographer, the initial impetus for forming Muhammadiyah can be attributed to his friends. In 1912, according to this account, twelve of his students, colleagues and teachers urged him to form a social and educational organization, the Muhammadiyah. From that point onward, Aḥmad Dahlan dedicated his entire life to the mission and vision of Muhammadiyah. Among its purposes was the purification of Islam from superstition. He is remembered as an intelligent and dedicated leader who is reported to have said: "If I work as fast as possible, what remains can be brought to perfection by another." In 1923, at the age of fifty-nine, he died after having delegated his work to his friends and his brother-in-law.⁶⁷

The birth of Muhammadiyah has been attributed to several factors. Alwi Shihāb suggests that there were at least three main causes responsible for the establishment of Muhammadiyah. The first is the Middle East-Indonesian connection: This view suggests that the birth of the Muhammadiyah was influenced by the widespread Islamic

reformist ideas in the Middle East, especially in Egypt.⁶⁸ Second, Muhammadiyah is seen as a systematic and religious response by the Muslims to a long history of ideological antagonism within Javanese society. It materialized from a long evolutionary process of deeply rooted conflict between the *putihan* (devoted Muslims) on one hand, and the *abangan* (nominal Muslims) on the other.⁶⁹ The Muhammadiyah was a conscious and deliberate attempt to reconcile the conflict between the two Javanese elites.⁷⁰ The third possible cause is less obvious and therefore somewhat neglected by scholars. It is a conscious response to the "Christian missionary activities". Alwi Shihab adds that the reason this possibility has been neglected is the hypersensitivity of the Indonesian government and its "unwillingness to discuss an issue that could bring to the surface the hidden antagonism between the Muslims and the Christians of Indonesia."⁷¹

Whatever the reasons may be, the Muhammadiyah bears a resemblance to Muhammad 'Abduh's reform movement, with some Indonesian peculiarities. Hence it is necessary to explicate the Indonesian counterpart in terms of its agenda of reform so as to reflect the environment in which Hamka lived.

One of the trademarks of the Islamic reform movement in general is reform of the educational system. The model for this reform was certainly not the traditional Muslim educational institution, but the educational system that

could harmonize the traditional Islamic sciences with modern European, secular education. In Indonesia, the Muhammadiyah and the *Persatuan Islām*⁷² went so far as to establish a Muslim counterpart to the Dutch government schools.⁷³ In the schools of the reform movement both the Islamic sciences and academic subjects such as mathematics and science were taught as compulsory subjects. Many European languages, such as English, French, Dutch, and German, were taught in the schools, in addition to the use of Arabic as the medium of religious instruction.⁷⁴

In an effort to educate the people, the Muhammadiyah applied several methods: producing publications, establishing new schools, and *tablīgh* (public religious lectures). In their preachings Muhammadiyah religious teachers discussed religious problems in a language that the people could understand. It was more issue-oriented than text-oriented. Because of this new approach to understanding Islam and studying Islamic sciences, the new '*ulamā*' were called the *kaum muda* '*ulama*' (young group's scholars). They related daily life to the text, and did not read the text simply for the sake of reading it, disregarding its relevance to the life of the people. In the Friday sermons for example, Arabic had been used traditionally as the medium of communication. The *kaum muda* '*ulamā*' instead used Malay, Minangkabau, or other local languages so that the people could comprehend what was being said. The *do'ā*

(supplication) after *ṣalāt* (prayer) was also given in the local languages instead of in Arabic. The traditional death ceremony that usually carried out by the people was abandoned. The slogan of the reform movements was, "Islam is only for those who can understand." This made reform ideas popular and allowed them to spread rapidly among the people.⁷⁵

As a result of this pragmatic and simple approach, the progress and success of the reform movements started to be noticed. This can be observed, according to Taufik Abdullah, in the increase in public debates over religious issues, the proliferation of religious publications, and the mushrooming of religious schools.⁷⁶ As a result, the newly-established religious schools came to be regarded as a source of prestige for Minangkabau. In a short period of time, Minangkabau became the center of Islamic education in Sumatra and, more importantly, became known as the center of the Muslim modernist movement in Indonesia.⁷⁷ But this success was not without a price, as the people of Minangkabau became polarized between *adat* and non-*adat* proponents, just as there was now a polarization between reform groups and the traditional establishment.

Hamka and the Indonesian Political Scenario

We shall be concerned in this section with the political scenario in Indonesia during Hamka's lifetime,

especially the early years. This era was marked by the emergence of local political parties in Sumatra, Minangkabau and other areas of Indonesia. However, we will only deal with the political institutions that had some direct bearing on Hamka. One particular party falls into this category: *Permi* (*Persatuan Muslimīn Indonesia*, Indonesian Muslim Association).

The emergence of *Permi* was in many ways a response to the ideological conflicts between the conservative Islamic party, *Sarekat Islām* (SI, Islamic Union), and the nationalist party, *Partai Nasional Indonesia* (PNI, Indonesian National Party). These two parties to a great extent defined the Indonesian political scenario in the twentieth century.

Sarekat Islām (Islamic Union)

Sarekat Islām (SI will be used thereafter) was established on November 11, 1911, by Hāji Samanhoeddhi (aka Wirjowokoro, d. 1956). SI grew out of *Sarekat Dagang* in Solo and Yogyakarta, and was founded mainly for three reasons: the rising competition in the Batik trade, the resentment toward the perceived attitude of superiority among the Chinese, and the oppression by the nobility of Solo.⁷⁸ SI aimed to realize a brotherly association of its members and to create harmony and mutual assistance among all Muslims, ultimately promoting common welfare, prosperity and

greatness of Indonesia.⁷⁹ In the course of its existence the association changed its name several times. In 1921 it changed to *Partai Sarekat Islām* (PSI, Islamic Union Party) and it changed again in 1930 to *Partai Sarekat Islām Indonesia* (PSII, Islamic Union Party of Indonesia).⁸⁰ These changes may be attributed to the expansion of the scope and goals of the association, as it became more politically oriented.

SI became more radical in its later years. It attempted to eliminate inequalities between the native people and the other inhabitants of Indonesia. To accomplish this goal, SI formulated eight action programs including political, economic, social, educational, and religious plans. In the field of politics, SI demanded the establishment of regional councils which were intended to create better conditions for electoral rights in the future. At the same time, traveling restrictions imposed by the Dutch upon some Muslim activists were demanded to be lifted.⁸¹ In the field of education, the party demanded the right of education for all Indonesians, as well as the removal of all discriminatory measures in admitting children to schools. In addition, the party demanded that the educational institutions at all levels be increased in number and their conditions improved.⁸²

In the religious sphere, the party demanded the freedom to spread the Islamic religion, a freedom like that of Christian missionaries. They demanded the recognition of

Islamic holidays and *kiyai* (religious scholars in Java) and that *penghulus* be paid by the Dutch colonial government, just as by the Protestant clergy and Catholic priests.⁸³ In the fields of legal rights and justice, the party demanded that the government ensure justice for all Indonesians without discrimination. The party also demanded the nationalization of vital industries so that local people would have a sense of ownership. In the area of taxation, the demand was for restructuring in order not to burden the people. In the social field, the party demanded that the government be more involved in identifying and solving social problems. The party sought government financial and psychological assistance for those attempting to solve the problems of drugs, gambling, child labor, and prostitution. In addition, it demanded that labor laws be promulgated to safeguard the interest of the workers.⁸⁴

These demands were obviously very difficult for the government to meet. This led to a further deepening of the conflict and hatred felt for the Dutch colonial government, which ultimately fired up the spirit of Independence.

As one can observe from the above action programs, the party's political character, as one scholar puts it, seemed to be nationalistic in nature but also to provide, as one scholar states, a definite role for Islam as "the framework of democratic ideas as well as the religion most suited for the spiritual education of the people."⁸⁵ The modern notion

of nationalism became quite obvious, however, when the party demanded that the government not interfere in religious matters and that it treats all religions on an equal basis.⁸⁶

As was the case with the Muhammadiyah and *Permi*, *SI* was not able to stop communist infiltration. As early as 1917, some branches of *SI* were influenced by communism, especially the one led by Samaun, the head of the *SI* of Semarang, who continually opposed the central party's leadership.⁸⁷ Due to the very nature of *SI*, which only addressed the most urgent needs of the Muslim, Samaun recognized a flaw that could be exploited. He argued that Communism would be able to address the needs of all, and would unite both Muslims and non-Muslims. Samaun regarded *SI* as the party of the Muslim capitalist, but *Sarekat Rakyat* (The People's Union, the communist branch of *SI*) as the party of the people as a whole, regardless of religion and race. As a result, Samaun was expelled from *SI* in 1921, but the communist influence remained intact. This led to disunity in *SI*. Ultimately, in 1921, *SI* was divided into two camps: the pro-communist group called *Sarekat Rakyat* and the anti-communist branch which maintained the name *Sarekat Islām*.⁸⁸

Partai Nasional Indonesia

At the height of this conflict within *Sarekat Islām*, a nationalist party, *Partai Nasional Indonesia* (PNI, Indonesian National Party) was formed under the leadership of the young and charismatic Sukarno. The emergence of PNI meant the creation of a new nationalist party which was religiously neutral.⁸⁹ The creation of PNI had varying consequences for SI: on one hand, it weakened SI because it drew away some of its members, but it also strengthened the struggle of SI to have PNI working for the struggle for Indonesian independence. In 1932 PNI established a branch in West Sumatra, a place that was still dominated by the Muslim reformist groups. In West Sumatra, the nationalistic and religiously neutral character of PNI eventually came into ideological conflict with young reformist groups. Hence, in order to maintain the presence of PNI in West Sumatra, PNI central authorities agreed to grant special privileges to their West Sumatra followers to deal with matters of religion and *adat* for which the central authorities would have less experience.⁹⁰

Persatuan Muslim Indonesia (Permi)

Permi was the only political party that had native roots in Sumatra. The party originally operated in the social and educational field, but was later transformed into a political party. The people most responsible for this transformation were the two young *al-Azhar* graduates, Hāji

Ilyās Ya'qūb⁹¹ and Hāji Mukhtar Luṭfī.⁹² Permi came into the political picture in Minangkabau in the midst of bitter debates between the nationalist PNI and SI (*Sarekat Islām*) which based its struggle on Islamic principles and allowed no role for nationalism. As a result, Indonesians were divided. In the views of the founders of Permi, this division was a detrimental factor. Indonesian unity in the face of Dutch colonialism was much-needed. Thus, Permi based its political identity on both Islam and nationalism. Permi members believed that Islam and nationalism were inseparable. In the words of one founder, Hāji Ilyās:

Man, whenever and wherever he lives, will always and certainly feel the need for religion and the need to belong to a nationBoth are very important to the rank and file of an association which is seeking progress. A sincere person will not tolerate the diminution of his religious light, while he will also be disturbed by the backwardness of his people... the more so when his own people live under suppression [oppression] and misery.⁹³

With the above principles, the party set its goal to establish Islam in Indonesia, a goal which could be realized only in an Independent Indonesia. Thus, its foremost issue was independence. As this was also the goal of SI and PNI, the common enemies were for a time able to cooperate with one another.⁹⁴ However, Permi's activities caught the attention of the Dutch colonial government, and many of its active members were arrested. Some were exiled, and finally, due to the constant pressure from the Dutch

colonial government and the adat functionaries, the party was dissolved in 1936.⁹⁵

It is clear from our discussion thus far that all the parties discussed above have ideological differences, but those differences did not make them lose their focus on the ultimate goal. They were able to work together based on a common goal: independence. It is therefore not surprising that the ideological differences were brought along with them to a new political stage of post-independence Indonesian national politics. Though post-independence Indonesian political parties may take different forms and variety of names, their ideological differences were unchanged: they are still divided along the lines of Islam, nationalism, and a combination of the two.

Hamka's Role in Indonesian Politics

The dynamic socio-political structures of Indonesia left their marks on the personality of Hamka. In 1944 and 1945, almost all social, political, and cultural changes in Indonesian society were mobilized toward achieving national independence. Hamka, though he was not politically prepared, was forced to take part in this struggle. He opted for two weapons: "through my tongue [words] and my pen."⁹⁶

Hamka made use of his persuasive manners of speaking and writing to express his thoughts about national unity. Hamka's first book, *Revolusi Fikiran* (Revolution of

Thought), was intended to demonstrate the role of individuals in an organization geared toward achieving independence. His second book, *Revolusi Agama* (Revolution of Religion), called for active participation of religious scholars in the political process. This book criticizes religious scholars who are careless about politics, for politics is only a tool to achieve a specified goal. Another book, *Adat Minangkabau dalam Menghadapi Revolusi* (Minangkabau Adat in Facing Revolution), explains the need and the role of adat functionaries in the political process. Hamka criticizes such functionaries for being parochial and concerned only with their own groups and localities.

As a result of his active participation, Hamka was appointed as secretary general of the *Front Pertahanan Nasional* (Defense National Front), formed during a national congress of all political parties and socio-economic organizations in West Sumatra.⁹⁷

This, however, was only the beginning of his political career. He later became a member of *Masyumi* (*Majlis Syura Muslim Indonesia*, Consultative Council of Indonesian Muslims), an Islamic political party. Within *Masyumi* Hamka actively participated in the political process of Indonesia.⁹⁸ During Sukarno's long rule, Hamka, together with M. Natsir (scholar and politician) rejected Sukarno's idea of *Demokrasi Terpimpin* (Guided Democracy). Consequently, in 1959, the Indonesian constitution was

dissolved, and in 1960, *Masyumi* was barred from national politics. After that event, Hamka withdrew from direct political involvement, and instead gave his concerted efforts to *da'wah Islāmiyyah* (Islamic preaching) in Masjid al-Azhar.⁹⁹ This resulted in many important works, one of which was the voluminous *Tafsīr al-Azhar*.

Concluding Remarks

Twentieth century Minangkabau witnessed a ferment of reform, and preaching of a return to the original sources of Islam, the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah* (tradition) of the Prophet. The Muslim reformists preached scripturalism (a reliance on the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* instead of the commentaries of classical scholars), the simplification of religious ceremonies, the condemnation of superstition, and the rejection of the worship of saints and spirits. The modernization of culture and society was their top priority, and as a result Islamic schools and Muslim youth's and women's organizations were founded.

It is not an exaggeration then, to say that the Islamic reform movements were among the factors that set the stage for the contemporary Islamic resurgence in the Muslim world in general and in Indonesia in particular.¹⁰⁰

Every scholar is the product of his or her time. His/her thoughts are constructed and influenced by the intellectual, social, religious and political environment of

his/her time. Hamka was a son of twentieth century Minangkabau and Indonesia. Hamka, the son of a modern reformist who lived during the reform period. He therefore had a reform mentality which was reflected in his writings.

Twentieth century Indonesia also marked the struggle for an independence into which each group tried to introduce its own definition of an independent Indonesia: PNI had a nationalistic outlook; the Muslim reformist group had social-cultural and educational approaches; and PKI had a socialistic approach to society. But these groups still maintained an undivided focus on independence. The inter-group discourses both directly and indirectly influenced the personality of Hamka. These situations laid the foundation necessary for understanding Hamka's thought and ideas which were implicitly or explicitly echoed in his writings. *Tafsīr al-Azhar* is considered to be Hamka's masterpiece, and the intellectual, social, and political discourses of that time are expressed in its pages.

ENDNOTES

1. Deliar Noer, *The Modernist Muslim Movement in Indonesia 1900-1942* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 30.

2. The conflict between *kaum muda* and *kaum tua* arose from different understandings of religious problems. The latter are those who adhered to traditional religious practices, while the former are those who wanted religious reform. For a detailed discussion of *kaum muda*, see Taufik Abdullah, *Schools and Politics: The Kaum Muda Movement in West Sumatra (1927-1933)* (Ithaca, Cornell Modern Indonesian Project, 1971), Chapter 3 *passim*.

3. Scholars differ on the origin of the term *padri*. William Roff is of the opinion that the term is from the Portuguese *lingua franca* term for cleric. Others have opined that *padri* is related to *orang padri*, men of Pedir (Pidie), the port in Aceh through which many pilgrims passed. However, they do not differ on the implication and meaning of the term. *Padri* were known locally as *orang putih* (white people) as opposed to *orang hitam* (black, or dark people), because of the white Arab-style clothing they wore, as opposed to the dark or black clothing worn by adat functionaries. See C. Dobbin, "Islamic Revivalism," pp. 330-332. See also William Roff, "South-East Asian Islam in the Nineteenth Century," *The Cambridge History of Islam*, ed., P.M. Holt, vol. 2a, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), pp. 165-7. See also Taufik Abdullah, *School and Politics: The Kaum Muda Movement in West Sumatra (1927-1933)*, (Monograph Series, Cornell Modern Indonesian Project, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, 1971), p. 5. However, the word *putih*, in my view, may not necessarily have referred to their clothing, but may have carried some moral connotations. In this case, white might connote the clean and uncorrupted people, or people clean from syncretic practices.

4. See Hamka, *Ayahku: Riwayat Hidup Dr. Haji Abdul Karim Amrullah dan Perjuangan Kaum Agama di Sumatera* (My Father: An Autobiography of Dr. H. Abdul Karim Amrullah and the Struggle of the Religious Group in Sumatra), 4th ed., (Jakarta: Umminda, 1982), pp. 14-8. For an account of *wahabism*, see 'Abdullāh al-Ṣāliḥ al-'Uthaymayn, *al-Shaykh*

Muhammad 'Abd al-Wahhāb, *Ḥayātuhu wa Fikruhu* (Riyād: Dār al-'Ilm, n.d). See also Samuel Graham Wilson, *Modern Movements Among Muslims* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1916), pp. 53-59; John Obert Voll, *Islam: Continuity and Change in the Modern World* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1982), pp. 59-62.

5. Taufik Abdullah, "Adat and Islam: An Examination of Conflict in Minangkabau," in *Readings on Islam in Southeast Asia*, ed. Ahmad Ibrahim, Sharon Siddique & others (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian studies, 1985), p. 95. The movement has been depicted by different scholars with different epithets other than "Islamic revivalism," such as Schrieke's "social revolution," Willick's "Coup de etat," or the "revolt of intellectual" favored by the Indonesian historian, Mansoer, or even the "war of independence" preferred by French scholars. Though most scholars agree that the movement has religious origin, Christine Dobbin attributed it to economic changes in Minangkabau. The trade patterns of a traditional, small scale, self-sufficient economy changed to that of an export-oriented economy. See Christine Dobbin, "Economic Change in Minangkabau As a factor in the Rise of the Padri Movement, 1784-1830," *Indonesia* 23 (1977), and "Islamic Revivalism in Minangkabau at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century," *Modern Asian Studies* vol.8, no. 3 (1974): pp. 330, 1-38. See also William R. Roff, "South-East Asian Islam in the Nineteenth Century", in *The Cambridge History of Islam*, vol. 2a, p. 167; Abdullah, *School and Politics*, p. 6.

6. *Penghulu* is the head of a matrilineal political unit in Minangkabau, not to be confused with the *penghulu* of Java, who is a religious official.

7. B. Schrieke, "Bijdrage tot de Bibliografie van de huidige godssdienstige beweging ter Sumatra's Westkust," *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land-en Volkenkunde*, LIX (1920), pp. 251-2, 260, as quoted in Christine Dobbin, "Islamic Revivalism in Minangkabau," pp. 319-320. See also Abdullah, "Adat and Islam," p. 97.

8. William R. Roff, "South-East Asian Islam," vol. 2a, p. 166. See also J.L. Peacock, *Indonesia: An Anthropological Perspective* (California: Good year Publishing Company, 1973), pp. 107-8.

9. Abdullah, "Adat and Islam," p. 97.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid. However, one may question at the accuracy of this observation. The changes in the social fabric of Minangkabau society can only be known when compared with the social system that existed before the *padri*, which was not discussed in that book.

12. A. W. P. Verkerk Pistorius, "De Priester en zijn onvloed op de samenleving in de Bovenlanden", *T.N.I* 2(1969): pp. 423-452 as quoted in Abdullah, "Adat and Islam," p. 98.

13. Ibid., p. 97, See also Hamka, *Islam dan Adat Minangkabau*, pp. i & ii; Abdullah, *Schools and Politics*, p. 6.

14. Noer, *Modernist Muslim Movement*, p. 25.

15. S. Hurgronje, *Mekka in the Latter Part*, p. 256.

16. C. Poensen, *Brieven Over den Islam uit de binnenlanden van Java* (Leiden: E.J Brill, 1886), p. 76. as quoted in Noer, *Modernist Muslim Movement*, p. 25.

17. For a detailed account of these ordinances, see, S. Hurgronje, "De Hadji Politiek der Indische Regeering," *Bijvoegsel van de Javabode*, No. 149 (1 July 1909) as quoted in Noer, *Modernist Muslim Movement*, p. 26.

18. Abdullah, *School and Politics*, p. 7. For the debate over the *ṭarīqat* school in Minangkabau see Schrieke, "Bijdrage," pp. 249-325.

19. For this conflict in Aceh, see S. Hurgronje, *The Achehnese*, trans. A. W. S. O'Sullivan, with an index by R. J. Wilkinson, vol. 2 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1906), pp. 10-20.

20. For a detailed discussion of this doctrine see R.A. Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism* (India: Idārah Adabiyyah, reprinted 1988). As for the mysticism in the Malay-Indonesian World, see S.M.N. al-Attas, *Ranīrī and the Wujūdiyyah of the 17th Century Aceh* (Kuala Lumpur: Malaysian Branch, Royal Asiatic Society, 1966).

21. This doctrine claims that the unity of Being experienced by sufis at the stage of union is only a matter of subjective perception (*shuhūd*). God, according to this doctrine, is completely other. The world is in no way one with God, nor in existence with God. God's existence is not identical with that of the world. God is one being and the world is another. See Muḥammad 'Abdul Haq Anṣārī, *Sufism and Shari'ah: A Study of Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindi's Effort to*

Reform Sufism (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1986), pp. 110ff.

22. See Hamka, *Ayahku*, pp. 10-4.

23. Ibid., pp. 11-2.

24. Hurgronje, *Achehnese*, pp. 18 & 19.

25. Abdullah, *Schools and Politics*, p. 7. See also C. Dobbin, "Islamic Revivalism in Minangkabu," pp. 324-28.

26. Abdullah, *Schools and Politics*, p. 7.

27. For a detailed account regarding this refutation see Sjech Achmad Chatib bin Abdul Latif, *Fatwa Tentang Tharikat Naqsjabandijah*, translated by A. Mn. Arief (Medan: Islamijah, 1965). See also K.A. Steenbrink, *Beberapa Aspek Tentang Islam di Indonesia Abad ke -19* (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1984), pp. 143-5.

28. James L. Peacock, *Purifying the Faith: The Muhammadijah Movement in Indonesian Islam* (California: The Benjamin/Cummings Publishing Company, 1978), p. 5.

29. See for example K.H. Moenawar Chalil, *Kembali kepada al-Qur'ān dan as-Sunnah*, (Returning to the Qur'ān and the Traditions of the Prophet) (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1958). This book propagates that those two primary sources are sufficient for Islamic religious life. Anything additional to them is *bid'ah* and therefore should be rejected.

30. Noer, *Modernist Muslim Movement*, p. 30. See also J. Peacock, *Purifying the Faith*, p. 7.

31. Noer, *Modernist Muslim Movement*, p. 30.

32. Shaykh Aḥmad Khatīb (1860-1916) was one of the earliest and the most important figures in initiating an Islamic reform movement in Minangkabau, and was later followed by his colleagues, one of whom was Hajī Rasūl, Hamka's father. Khatīb was born in Kota Gedang in 1860. His father, 'Abdul Latīf Khatīb, was the first Malay teacher at the teachers' training school in Bukit Tinggi. Aḥmad Khatīb went to Makkah to study while he was young a common practice among educated Muslims at that time. Khatīb stayed in Makkah for a long while; he not only studied there but also taught and married the daughter of an influential Arab merchant. During his stay in Makkah he was appointed an *Imām* in Masjid al-Ḥarām, a very respectable position rarely achieved by Malay-Indonesians in Makkah. He wrote forty-nine books in various disciplines of Islamic learning. See "Sjech Ahmad Chatib bin

Abdul Latif Al-Minangkabawi," *Pedoman Masjarakat* (1941): pp. 307-323.

33. This journal was jointly issued and edited by Muḥammad 'Abduh and Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (1839-97) in Paris in 1884. The contents of this periodical were so volatile and critical about western powers and the position of Muslims that its distribution was suppressed by the colonial powers. The Dutch also banned its distribution in Indonesia. However, it was a little too late since the periodical was already distributed in Indonesia. Even after it was banned, Indonesians could obtain it through smugglers. Through this limited circulation the journal came to influence the youth of Indonesia. See Oemar Amin Hoesin, "Sedjarah Perkembangan Politik Modern di Indonesia" (The History of Modern Political Development in Indonesia), *Hikmah*, vol. 8, no.20/21 (1955): pp. 21, 24-26.

34. Noer, *Modernist Muslim Movement*, p. 32.

35. Ibid., p. 33. The *Naqshabandiyyah ṭarīqat* was brought to Minangkabau, according to Schrieke, by Sheykh Ismā'īl of Simabur. However, nothing much is known about him. See B. Schrieke, "Bijdrage tot de Bibliografie Van Huidige Godsdienstige Beweging ter Sumatra's Westkust," *TBG* 59 (1920): pp. 262-269, as quoted in Abdullah, *School and Politics*, p. 7, note 10. Aḥmad Khatīb's attitude is presented at length in his polemical book, *Fatwa Tentang Tharikat Naqshabandiyyah*, 1965).

36. It is a practice that recalls the image of a teacher to seek intercession. Aḥmad Khatīb described this practice as worshiping idols, as the idols worshipers too considered their idols intercessors. Seeking intercession from shaykh is considered associating something with God (*shirk*). Muslims, Khātīb adds, a person should communicate directly with God without an intermediary. See Hamka, *Tasauf: Perkembangan dan Pemurniannya*, pp. 245-46.

37. Ibid., pp. 246-8.

38. Noer, *Modernist Muslim Movement*, p. 33.

39. Ibid., p. 34.

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid., pp. 33-34.

42. Ibid., p. 35.

43. The motto of the periodical was from the Qur'ān, *Sūrat al-Nahl* (16):125 in which God says:

Invite (all) to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best. For thy Lord knoweth best, who have strayed from His path, and who receive guidance.

44. According to Hamka, *parewa* refers to freedom-loving young people (men) who lead a legendary style of life which, according to Noer, still exists in Minangkabau today. As Hamka explains it:

....*parewa*... do not want to disturb the family's life. They live by gambling, cock-fighting, etc. They are also experts in *pentjak silat* (a kind of self-defense martial art). They have wide contacts, and the *parewa* of different villages respect and honor each other. But they will very strongly defend the honor of the *suku* (tribe) or village. As far as their relationships with friends are concerned, they will defend them to the death.... They refrain from flirting and from referring to girls with lascivious names. To those who lose in the game of dice, so that all their money is gone, the winner will provide some clothing and money, and the loser's expenses for travelling home are paid for by the winner. The *parewa* honor religious people, and sometimes they are generous. They are loyal and ready to give help.

For a detailed discussion of the *parewa*, see Hamka, *Tenggelamnja Kapal van der Wijck* (The Floundering of van der Wijck) (Djakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1994). This portion is translated by and quoted in Noer, *Modernist Muslim Movement*, p. 35.

45. Ibid., p. 37.

46. Ibid., p. 36.

47. In this regard he criticized women for wearing the *kebaya*, a traditional blouse for women, in the presence of a non-*muhrim* (*muhrim* is a person who is prohibited to marry). See Noer, *Modernist Muslim Movement*, p. 37.

48. Anti-sufi polemics in twentieth century Minangkabau began with Sheykh Ahmad Khatīb's book *Izhār Zughal li al-Kāzibīn fi Tashabbuhihim bi al-Ṣādiqīn* (Displaying the Deviation of the Liars for their Resemblance with the

Honest) directed against the practices of *ṭarīqat Naqshabandiyah*. This book was answered by Sheykh Sayyed Munka, a sheykh of the *Naqshabandiyah* order in Minangkabau, with his book *al-Āyāt al-Bayyinah lī al-Munṣifin fi Izālah Khurafāt ba'di 'Āshibīn* (The Clear Signs for the Repenters to Wipe Out the Superstitions from Some of the Zealots). It was in response to this that 'Abdul Karīm wrote the book mentioned above. See B.J.O. Schrieke, *Pergolakan Agama di Sumatra Barat: Sebuah Sumbangan Bibliography*, trans. Soerbarda Poerbakawatja (Jakarta: Bharatara, 1973), p. 32.

49. Ibid., p. 37.

50. A Surau is a place of worship like a mosque, but on a smaller scale. It normally serves as a center for studies and other community activities. Surau Jembatan Besi, located in Pandang Panjang, traditionally offers such traditional courses as *fiqh*, *kalām*, and *tafsīr*. But in 1904, when Hāji 'Abdullāh Aḥmad and Hāji Rasūl returned from Makkah, the emphasis was shifted to 'ilm *ālāt* (tools of knowledge), mainly the mastery of Arabic language and its different disciplines, with the purpose of equipping students with the sciences in order to enable them to consult the original sources the Qur'ān and Sunnah by themselves. In 1916 the traditional gradeless classes were replaced by the class system, but the students still sat on the floor (we will say more about this when we discuss the background of Hamka, as he was a product of this system). As the process of modernization of its curriculum was underway, the form of the traditional school was changed, modelled after the government school, and its name was changed to the *Tawālib School*. Therefore Surau Jembatan Besi, as a result of modernization changed into *Tawālib School*. See Noer, *Modernist Muslim Movement*, pp. 44-6.

51. We will give a brief account of this in the next section, "Sumatra *Tawālib*."

52. We will discuss this organization in a later section.

53. Guru Ordinance is the Dutch colonial authorities' regulation for Muslim teachers. This ordinance was issued twice: once in 1905 and again in 1925. In general the ordinance was meant to monitor and regulate influential Muslim teachers. It required religious teachers to have written permission from the Regent or his equivalent. This permission specified the nature of education and the regions in which they could teach. The regent and his equivalent would exercise supervision and determine whether the teachers acted in accordance with the license. See Noer, *Modernist Muslim Movement*, p. 175.

54. Hamka, *Ajahku*, p. 87.
55. Noer, *Modernist Muslim Movement*, pp. 38, 39
56. Fakhri Ali, "Hamka dan Masyarakat Islam Indonesia: catatan Pendahuluan Riwayat dan Perjuangannya (Hamka and Indonesian Muslim Society: An Introduction to His Life and Struggle)," *Prisma*, 12, no. 2 (Feb. 1983): p. 51.
57. A religious scholar in Minangkabau who was one of the leading figures in changing teaching techniques and introducing new subjects into Islamic schools. He was active from the turn of the twentieth century through the Japanese occupation. See Noer, *Modernist Muslim Movement*, p. 40.
58. He was an educator in Minangkabau in the early part of the twentieth century. For an account of al-Junūsi, see Hamka, *Pengaruh Muḥammad 'Abduh*, pp. 12-13.
59. A reformer who was active in Java, but was originally from the Sūdān. He contributed a great deal in disseminating 'Abduh's ideas in Indonesia. He was a founder of the *al-Irshād*, a modernist Muslim organization for Arab-born Indonesians, in the early part of the twentieth century. For a more detailed discussion on these reform figures see Noer, *Modernist Muslim Movement*, pp. 40-41, 63-69. See also Hamka, *Pengaruh Muḥammad 'Abduh*, pp. 15-17.
60. see note 50 above.
61. Abdullah, *School and Politics*, p. 35.
62. Roesad, "Nota over de Godsdienstig-Politeke Beweging ter Sumatra's Weskust" (June 3, 1929), *Mailrapport* 1518x/'33 as quoted in Abdullah, *School and Politics*, p. 35. See also Noer, *Modernist Muslim Movement*, p.62.
63. Abdullah, *Schools and Politics*, pp. 35-36.
64. For a detailed discussion of Sumatra Tawālib, see Muhammad Dien, *Tambo Sumatera Thawalib*, Padang Panjang: Sumatra Thawalib tjabang Pasar Usang, 1930, and for the Communist uprising in Minangkabau in the 1920's see Harry J. Benda, "The Communist Rebellions of 1926-1927 in Indonesia," *The Pacific Historical Review* 24(1955): pp. 139-52; see also, Harry J. Benda and Ruth T. McVey, *The Communist Uprisings of 1926-1927 in Indonesia: Key Documents* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell Modern Indonesian Project, 1960); Abdullah, *Schools and Politics*, p. 38.
65. Abdullah, *Schools and Politics*, p. 40.

66. After returning from Makkah, it was common for the Javanese Muslims to change their Javanese names to Arabic names. Ahmad Dahlan (the new acquired name) was born to a religious family. His father and grand father were *khatīb* at the grant mosque of Yogjakarta. After a preliminary education in his home and in the village school, he was sent to Makkah, where he stayed for several years studying under various teachers in various subjects, including the Qur'ān and hadīth, theology, astronomy, and Islamic law. While in Makkah he came in contact with the ideas of the Egyptian reformer Muḥammad 'Abduh. Upon returning from Makkah he became a *batik* trader. He traveled to neighboring places selling *batik*. As he traveled, he taught Islam and encouraged the improvement of Muslim communities. During this period he married Siti Walīdah, who remained his life-long wife. For a detailed biography of Ahmad Dahlan, see H.M. Junus Anis, *Riwayat Hidup K.H.A. Dahlan, Dan Perdjoangannya*, 1962). And also Solochin Salam, K.H.A. Dahlan, *Reformer, Islam Indonesia* (K.H.A. Dahlan, Indoneisan Muslim Reformer) (Djakarta: Djajamurni, 1963); James L. Peacock, "Muhammadiyah" in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Modern Islamic World*, 1996.

67. James Peacock, "Muhammadiyah," p. 168.

68. Alwi Shihab, "The Muhammadiyah Movement and its Controversy with Christian Mission" (Ph.D. diss., Temple University, 1995), pp. 208-227.

69. Clifford Geertz divides Javanese society into three groups, namely, the *putihan*, *abangan* and *priyayi* (nobility), see C. Geertz, *The Religion of Java* (Glencoe III: The Free Press, 1960), especially note 35. This division, according to Noer is "quite misleading" because it is not based on the same criteria. The division between *putihan* and *abangan* is based on religious criteria while the *priyayi* is based on the blood nobility. See Noer, *Modernist Muslim Movement*, note 33, p. 19.

70. Shihab, "Muhammadiyah and Its Controversy," pp. 227-241.

71. For an extensive discussion on the subject see, Shihab, "Muhammadiyah and Its Controversy," pp. 206, 242-271.

72. This is the name of an Islamic association founded in 1926 and belonging to the camp of the modernist Muslims (*kaum muda*). It aims to purify Indonesian Muslim society from syncretic practices by propagating the pristine teaching of Islam. See Noer, *Modernist Muslim Movement*, pp. 83-92. K. Steenbrink, *Dutch Colonialism and Indonesian Islam* (Amsterdam: Rodopi B.V., 1993), pp. 119-120, 134.

73. Noer, *Modernist Muslim Movement*, p. 306.
74. Ibid., p. 307. See also Federspiel, "The Muhammadijah," pp. 75.
75. Mahmud Junus, *Sejarah Pendidikan Islam di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Pusat Mahmudiah, 1960), pp. 76-79. See also Abdullah, *School and Politics*, p. 53; M.D. Mansoer and others, *Sedjarah Minangkabau* (Jakarta: Bhratara, 1970), p. 180; Federspiel, "The Muhammadijah," p. 66.
76. Abdullah, *School and Politics*, p. 54.
77. Ibid.
78. The attitude of the Chinese started to change, and they began to look down on the other Indonesians after the 1911 Chinese revolution. The Chinese even considered themselves as equals to the Dutch. As a result, clashes between these two groups began. As for the hostile reactions against the Solo nobility, these were the remnants of feudal practices. For example, commoners were prohibited to wear a certain kind of *batik*, thus the people were uncomfortable and embarrassed in the presence of the nobility. It is also reported that force was used by the nobility to seize attractive women. See O.S. Tjokroaminoto, *Neratja* (16 March 1921), and also in *Fadjar Asia* (28 January 1929).
79. Noer, *Modernist Muslim Movement*, p. 104.
80. Ibid., p. 101.
81. Ibid., p. 114.
82. Ibid.
83. Ibid.
84. Ibid., p. 115.
85. Ibid., p. 113.
86. Ibid.
87. Ibid., pp. 119, 122.
88. Ibid., p. 126.
89. Ibid., p. 138.
90. Ibid.

91. He was born in 1903 in Asam Kumbang, Bajang (Painan, Minangkabau), the son of a textile trader, Ilyas Ya'kub, a former clerk for the coal mines in Sawahlunto. He resigned from his old job with the Dutch because of his distaste for Dutch treatment of the coolies of the coal mines. He obtained his religious education in Makkah and Egypt. While he was in Egypt he associated with *Hizb al-Watan* (the Ranks of the Nation), a political party founded by Mustafa Kamil. He was a highly regarded and active member of the Indonesian and Malayan Students' Association in Egypt. He had a cordial relationship with PNI (Party Nasional Indonesia) and Sarekat Islam. Both his acquaintance with PNI and SI and his experience in Egypt might have influenced him to merge Islam and nationalism in his political struggle. See Noer, *Modernist Muslim Movement*, p. 154.

92. Hāji Mukhtar was born in Balingka, Bukittinggi, in 1900. His father, Haji 'Abdul Luṭfī was an 'ālim. Hāji Mukhtār fled to Egypt through Malaya, escaping arrest by the Dutch colonial government for his political activism. In Egypt he did not associate with any Egyptian educational institutions due to financial constraints, but he associated with *Hizb al-Watan* and the Indonesian and Malayan Students Association, especially in contributing to their journal *Seruan Azhar* and the *Pilihan Timur*. Noer observes that because Mukhtar witnessed the conflict based on philosophical foundations between the PNI and SI that brought about his idea to merge the two principles in *Permi*. See Noer, *Modernist Muslim Movement*, pp. 153, 155.

93. *Medan Rakjat*, Vol. I No. 2 (February 1931), p. 10. as quoted in Noer, *Modernist Muslim Movement*, p. 155.

94. *Ibid.*, p. 155.

95. *Ibid.*

96. Fakhri, "Hamka dan Masyarakat Islam," p. 57.

97. *Ibid.*

98. *Ibid.*, pp. 57-8.

99. *Ibid.*, pp. 58-9.

100. J.L. Peacock, *Purifying the Faith*, pp. 5, 8.

CHAPTER 4
LIFE AND WORKS OF HAMKA
Introductory Remarks

Hamka lived during a time when extensive reforms were being carried out by Muslim reformists in Indonesia in general and in Minangkabau in particular. The ambience of reform was directly felt by Hamka and left a vivid mark on his life and thought. This is because he was brought up in a reformist family and attended reformist schools. The reformist environment created by his father in Minangkabau, and complemented by Hamka's nature and inquisitive mind shaped a unique personality that was to dominate Islamic intellectual discourse of twentieth century Indonesia.

This chapter is an attempt to delineate a historical background of Hamka so as to be able to understand what was reflected in his scholarly works. In the second half of the chapter some aspects of his works will be discussed. His long career in scholarship will be examined by looking into his works in various fields of knowledge. His novels, for example, were written in an unorthodox way, and incorporated in them is his message of Islamic *da'wah*.

Hamka's Childhood and Early Education

Hāji 'Abd al-Malik Karīm Amrullāh, popularly known as Buya Hamka or just Hamka, an acronym of his full name, was

born in a famous 'ulamā' family of Minangkabau. His father, Dr. 'Abd al-Karīm Amrullāh (AKA Hāji Rasūl) was a respected *kaum muda* 'ulamā' (reformist scholar). Hamka's great-great grandfather, 'Abdullah 'Ārif, commonly called Tuanku Nan Tuo di Koto Tuo or Tuanku Pariaman, was an important figure in the *Padri* movement.¹ Hamka's grandfather, Shaykh Amrullāh was a religious teacher in Minangkabau who taught Islamic sciences in a *surau* (place for prayer and Islamic education). He was also a famous Shaykh in the *Naqshabandiyyah* order.² The family chronicle mentions that he had eight wives and forty-six children. The most famous of these children was 'Abd al-Karīm Amrullāh, Hamka's father.³

Hamka was born on February 16, 1908, in Maningjau, Minangkabau. Hamka's mother, Shāfiyah was the second wife of Hāji Rasūl, whom he married after her older sister, Rayhanah, Hāji Rasūl's first wife, passed away in Makkah. It was the hope of Hamka's family, especially his father, that one day Hamka would become the 'ulamā' to succeed his father. In Hamka's autobiography⁴ he reports that he was told by his grandmother that when Hamka was born, his father exclaimed, "*Sepuluh tahun !*" (Ten years!). This exclamation indicating the length of time that he wanted his son to stay and study in Makkah. The 'ulamā' role was a proud tradition in Hamka's family, and the "ten years" story was told to

Hamka over and over again to remind him of his father's pride at his birth.⁵

At the age of six months, and in accordance with adat tradition, Hamka was brought to his father's family's house (*rumah bako*).⁶ At the age of four his parents migrated to Padang, as requested by a friend Hāji 'Abdullāh Ahmād who had just published a reform journal, *al-Munīr* with 'Abd al-Karīm. However, as requested by his mother's family members, Hamka was left behind with them in Maningjau.⁷ Two years after that his parents moved again, this time to Padang Panjang; the people there requested that they come to teach Islam, and this time they took Hamka with them. As Hamka had not been living with his father the image he had of him was one of a fearsome and respected figure.⁸

In about 1916, Hamka was enrolled in *Sekolah Desa* (Village School). According to Hamka, the students there felt inferior to the pupils of the *Sekolah Gubernemen* (Government School) which was attended by the children of the Dutch and Indonesian officials.⁹ In the same year, Hamka was enrolled in the Arabic evening school, *Diniyah School*, established by Zaynuddīn Lebai al-Junūsy.¹⁰ In these schools Hamka was known as a *budak nakal* (naughty boy). Teachers were unable to control him as he was not interested in what was taught. Periodically, however, he was also known as *anak yang baik* (good son). In his autobiography he mentions that one day he took the hand of a blind man to guide him in the

marketplace; when the blind man attempted to reward him for his help, Hamka declined.¹¹

After only three years in the *Sekolah Desa*, his father enrolled him in a *Ṭawālib* School. At this point he was still attending two religious schools, *Dīniyyah* in the morning and *Ṭawālib* in the evening. To the chagrin of his father, none of the traditional subjects such as Arabic grammar, Islamic jurisprudence, or Islamic theology, all of which were taught in those schools, caught his interest. There was only one subject which he loved, *al-'aruḍ* (Arabic literature) which includes *shi'r* (Arabic poetry) and *manṭiq* (sylogism), among other things.¹²

At the age of twelve came a turning point in Hamka's education. Traditional learning was not his interest. Thus he spent most of his time in the library of Lebai al-Junūsi, *kutub khānah*, reading foreign novels which were translated into Arabic and Indonesian languages. He also spent much of his time reading popular publications by Kantoor voor de Volkslectuur and the Indonesian magazine "*Bintang Hindia*," which contained the articles of Dr. Abdul Rivai of Minangkabau.¹³ This keen interest in reading exposed him to foreign ideas for the first time. When his father came to know about it, he asked, "Are you going to be a scholar or just a story teller?"¹⁴ But, surprisingly, his father did not object to his interest in novels and non-religious

readings which were to open new avenues and broaden his horizons.

Another significant factor that influenced Hamka psychologically and affected his way of thinking was the divorce of his mother. It was a normal practice in *adat* (custom) to marry and divorce. Hamka described his father in his autobiography:

My father was a famous religious teacher who had not liberated himself from the *adat*. To be married again and again, then divorce, then marry again, that is the glorious way of living that has to be followed by all people of importance, both in the sphere of *adat*, as well as religion.¹⁵

The separation of his parents and the consequences he had to bear changed his attitude toward *adat* practices. Hamka later commented that the "unchangeable *adat* practices are too archaic; they should be considered like antique objects which should be displayed in a museum."¹⁶ Hamka, was now becoming more rebellious against his father. After realizing Hamka's situation, his father became worried that his own dream of making Hamka an '*ulamā*' would not be realized.

At the age of fourteen, he enrolled Hamka in the reformist *Ṭawālib* School of Parabek, which was established and directed by a great reformist '*ulamā*', Shaykh Ibrahīm Mūsā¹⁷ (1882-1953). Most of Hamka's time, however, was not devoted to religious instruction but to the famous story

tellers and *Pancat Silat* (traditional martial arts) in the nearby neighborhood.¹⁸

In 1923 Hamka fled to Java for more opportunities and more exposure to non-religious readings, especially daily newspapers and periodicals. Though some scholars, like Steenbrink, attribute the move to an unhappy love affair, this cannot be proven. However, Hamka did not reach Java, as he fell ill on the way, suffering from smallpox and malaria. For the two months before he was sent back to Padang Panjang, he was nursed by one of the Minangkabau teachers living in Bengkulu.¹⁹

In 1924 he travelled to Java again, but this time with the blessing of his father. When he reached Yogya he was received by his uncle, Ja'far Amrullāh, and introduced to *Sarekat Islām* (Islamic Union).²⁰ While in Yogya Hamka found areas of study that fit his interest. Hamka then came into contact with H.O.S. Chokroaminoto who taught Islam and Socialism, R.M. Suryopranoto (Raja Mogok) who taught Sociology, H. Fakhr al-Dīn, a Muhammadiyah leader who taught *Agama Islām* (Islamic Sciences), and Ki Bagus Hadikusumo from whom Hamka learned *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (the science of Qur'anic exegesis). There he also came to know of and participate in the struggle of *Jong Islamieten Bond* (The Young Muslims Union).²¹

These encounters with modern scholars, modern subjects and new social organizations were enriching experiences that

seemed to fit quite well with Hamka's interest and inclination. Hamka reported that in Yogya he encountered a new brand of Islam: "Islam as something alive which in turn produces the dynamic understandings and activities of Islam." This "new brand of Islam" was able to address modern social and cultural problems. This perception of Islam could not be found in Minangkabau, where teachings were dogmatic and rigid.²² In his autobiography Hamka explains:

In Minangkabau all the people are Muslims and there are no confrontations with other faiths. Therefore Minangkabau people and especially its religious leader do not receive any stimuli to do research in the field of religion in order to defend it against Christian missions or against the Javanese religion that is known as *klenik* (sorcery)...At that time the Minangkabau religious leaders only fought among themselves and they discussed many aspects of Islamic law that have no serious meaning altogether.²³

It is worth asking why the new perception of Islam was not born in Minangkabau. Though Minangkabau was known for its modern Muslim reformers, it lacked social heterogeneity by which Islam is challenged. In other words, it had no external impetus that could drive Minangkabau Muslims feeling the need for change. The only significant challenges to Islam in Minangkabau were perhaps the *adat* practices.

In 1925 Hamka proceeded to Perkalongan, where Sutan (St.) Mansūr, his brother-in-law, was a local leader of Muhammadiyah and Hamka's personal tutor for the six months of his stay in Perkalongan. There Hamka observed the daily

activities of an organization less rigid and less militant than the group around his father in Minangkabau. Priority was given to social work, welfare activities, and effective solidarity among the Muslims, rather than the "reformist dogmatism" taught by his father.²⁴

The dynamism of Islam in Yogya, according to Hamka, was due to the challenges posed by other religions. Yogya was multi-religious and multi-ethnic; Islam had to adapt to this diversity. On the other hand in Minangkabau, an Islamic city, there were no other challenges beside *adat* with which to be dealt dogmatically. The '*ulamā*' did not bother to address different aspects of Islam because they could live with the ceremonial form of Islam which was not a threat to *adat* but rather coexisted with it.²⁵ A similar social environment could also be observed in Medan. Though a small town, Medan grew rapidly during the economic boom after World War I and also experienced immigration of many different ethnic and religious groups. This complexity of population which Reid called an "ethnic web"²⁶ stretched Islam and challenged its applicability.

In June of 1925, Hamka returned to Minangkabau, followed by his mentor St. Mansur. Since his meetings with different scholars and his involvement in different organizations, Hamka returned to Minangkabau as a different person, more aggressive in his approach, more rhetorical in his speeches and more self-confident. Minangkabau at that

time was slightly chaotic, as one of 'Abd al-Karīm's students, Dato Bantuah, had introduced Communism. This caused 'Abd al-Karīm to lose interest in teaching at his *surau*, and he thus left the position to one of his older students. At that time 'Abd al-Karīm visited Java and became interested in the activities and approaches of Muhammadiyah. He then opened a Muhammadiyah branch in Minangkabau with his son-in-law as leader. Hamka was given the responsibility to establish the *tablīgh Muḥammadiyah*, a public speaking training center for Minangkabau youth.²⁷

Meanwhile, Hamka began to subscribe to many famous publications: *Hindia Baru* (edited by H. A. Salim), *Bendera Islam* (edited by H. Tabrani), and *Seruan Azhar* (edited by Mokhtar Luṭfī and his friends in Egypt). These new materials further strengthened his new perspective on Islam acquired in Yogya.²⁸ However, Hamka was still being criticized by even his own father for lacking in the knowledge of *Naḥū* (Arabic grammar) and *Ṣarf* (the science of conjugation of verbs in the Arabic language). Word was floating around that "*si Malik hanya pandai pidato tetapi tidak 'ālim*" (si Malik [Hamka] only knows how to give speeches but is not learned). This criticism challenged Hamka's intellectual capacity, and as a result, Hamka went to Makkah to study those subjects in which he was weak.²⁹

He went to Makkah in 1927 with the intention of staying for many years to gain a more complete knowledge of Islam

and to follow in the footsteps of his father and grandfather. While in Makkah he worked with the printing company of the father-in-law of Hāji Aḥmad Khatīb, his father's former teacher, to support his stay in Makkah. That stay in Makkah provided an opportunity for Hamka to practice the Arabic he had learned at home. Hamka was an excellent and effective communicator, and his Arabic fluency was better than that of the average Indonesian pilgrim. Due to his skill in communication, he was appointed the head of the Indonesian delegation to King 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Sa'ūd who conquered Makkah in 1923. Hamka requested the freedom to continue teaching Indonesian pilgrims in the Shāfi'ī school of law.³⁰

After the pilgrimage season was over, Hamka was reluctant to return to Minangkabau. However, after meeting with Hāji Agus Salīm (d. 1954), the western-educated Minangkabau political leader who was working as an assistant to the Dutch consul in Jeddah, Hamka returned home. Agus Salīm asked:

What are you waiting here for? You should rather go home. There are many important activities, the movement, education, and the struggle (*perjuangan*) that must be done in Indonesia.³¹

Hamka took that advice and went back to Indonesia, but he did not return directly to his father's house in Minangkabau. After arriving at the harbor of Medan he accepted a job even though it was poorly paid, as a religious teacher and journalist for *Pelita Andalas* and

other newspapers.³² He was not interested in returning home. The old criticism that he was not 'ālim was still haunting him. However, when he met St. Mansur, for whom he had respect, Hamka consented to return home, where he became an active preacher and journalist for Muhammadiyah. All this occurred in 1928. In the same year he went to Java again to attend the Muhammadiyah congress in Surakarta. In 1929 he married his long-time fiancée, Siti Raham. At that time he was twenty-one years of age, and she was fifteen. This was a happy marriage which lasted forty-two years, until Siti Raham died in 1972.³³

During his illustrious career, Hamka received honorary degrees from al-Azhar University in Cairo in 1958 and the National University of Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur in 1974. The daily *Berita Buana* named him "Man of the Year" in 1980. He had a great career as a journalist, an Islamic preacher, a politician, and above all as an 'ulamā' and prolific writer.

Hamka's Works³⁴

Besides his monumental *tafsīr*, Hamka wrote more than a hundred books, including works of fiction. He wrote on subjects as varied as politics, Minangkabau adat, history and biography, Islamic doctrine, ethics, and mysticism. Almost all of his works were printed, and many have been reprinted several times. Several collections of his writings were also published posthumously.

As mentioned earlier, the genre of writing that Hamka preferred was not favored by the traditional 'ulamā'. Hamka was not interested in traditional subjects taught in religious schools because to him the language was rigid. He preferred to read subjects like *tārīkh* (history), *shi'r* (poetry), and *kesusasteraan* (literature). In his autobiography he mentions that his father was surprised to learn that in Hamka's personal library, books on literature and history exceeded those on religious sciences such as *ḥadīth*, *tafsīr*, and 'ilm al-kalām. Hamka explained: "Let the father become a great 'ulamā', and please pray for your son (*anakda*, Hamka) to become a great scholar (*pujangga besar*)."³⁵ In short, Hamka was conscious of what kind of scholar he wanted to be, that is, not one like his father.

Hamka's career as a writer began very early. In 1925 he edited a magazine, *Khāṭib al-Ummah*, which had a limited circulation of five hundred copies. In 1929 he wrote *Si Sabariah*, his first novel in the Minang language using jawi letters.³⁶ In 1930, the nineteenth Congress of Muhammadiyah was held in Bukittinggi, and Hamka was asked to present a paper under the title of *Agama Islam dan Adat Minangkabau* (Islam and Minangkabau adat). He subtly commented on the incompatibility of some of adat practices with Islam, especially the matrilineal law of inheritance and marriage and divorce practices by the religious and adat dignitaries in Minangkabau.³⁷

In 1931, at the twentieth Congress of Muhammadiyah held in Yogya, Hamka again was given the opportunity to speak on the topic *Muhammadiyah di Sumatera* (Muhammadiyah in Sumatra).³⁸ Because of these speeches in the two congresses, his oratorical capability was recognized by the Muhammadiyah members. He was appointed as an official preacher (*muballigh*) for the Muhammadiyah. In 1932 he wrote another novel, *Layla Majnun*, which was modelled after the famous Arabic romance. In 1933 he was sent to Makasar, Sulawesi to consolidate and expand the local Muhammadiyah branch. As its propagator, he traveled to many places to promote and spread the ideas of Muhammadiyah.³⁹

After his return from Makasar he was appointed as director for *Kulliyah Muballighīn*, one of the Muhammadiyah schools in Padang Panjang. However, the salary was so low that he could not make a living from it, so he left the post. In 1935 he accepted an offer as an editor for the weekly Islamic Journal, *Pedoman Masyarakat* (Guidance for the Community) in Medan. In Medan he was not only an editor but an author, and here his writing career started to blossom as his writings were recognized by the people.⁴⁰ It all began with a series of articles, and serial novels in *Pedoman Masyarakat*. From these emerged such works as *Di Bawah Lindungan Ka'bah* (In the Shadow of the Ka'bah, 1936,)⁴¹ *Tenggelamnya Kapal van der Wijck* (The Foundering of the Ship van der Wijck, 1938,)⁴² *Tasauif Moderen* (Modern Mysticism,

1939), *Falsafat Hidup* (The Philosophy of Life, 1939,) *Merantau ke Deli* (The Journey to Deli, 1939,)⁴³ and *Tuan Direktor* (The Director, 1939.)⁴⁴

In his mystical works, *Tasauf moderen* (Modern Mysticism, first published in 1939), *Falsafat Hidup* (The Philosophy of Life, 1939), *Lembaga Budi* (The Principle of Ethics, 1940), and *Dari Perbendaharaan Lama* (From the Old Heritage, 1963,) Hamka tried to restore the real meaning of mysticism which at that time in Indonesia was equated with *ṭarīqah* (known as *tarikat* in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago). He rejected the *ṭarīqah* organization, especially the practice of *rābiṭah* and *waṣilah*. Hamka's basic principle in mysticism was that the real mysticism must not try to eliminate the boundaries between man and the Creator.⁴⁵ Instead, man should recognize the differences and act within the boundaries. Mysticism to Hamka is not one of passivity and the practices of seclusion, which may lead to social inactivity. The sufi must play an active role in society.

Perkembangan Tasauf dari Abad ke Abad (The Development of Mysticism from Decade to Decade, 1952) contains a historical development of sufism in the Islamic world, as well as accounts of various sufi figures and their doctrines. The book also studies sufism in Indonesia and its intermingling with local beliefs, especially *kebatinan Jawa* (Javanese mysticism), the practice of mystical rites based

on a mixture of religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, and animism. As a result of that mixture, a new brand of sufism emerged which Hamka considered *khurafāt* (superstition). To counter this alleged corruption, Hamka wrote *Tasauf: Perkembangan dan Permurniannya* (Mysticism: Its Development and Its Purification, 1983),⁴⁶ aiming to distinguish pure sufism originating from the practices of the Prophet from extraneous local accretions.

Tasauf Modern is one of Hamka's major works on mysticism. It was written in the 1930's upon the request of a Chinese student who lamented that Islam was strict in law and Jurisprudence and had no interest in philosophy or mysticism. In response to that request Hamka wrote a series of articles on mysticism which were later collected in a book. *Tasauf Modern*, as its title claims, is a study of mysticism. However, a look at this work reveals that it is not mysticism as usually understood in the traditional sense, but rather ethical philosophy and religious psychology in the sense of *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* of Imām al-Ghazālī (d. 1111). This method of writing perhaps can relate better to the non-specialist readers seeking practical application of Islam. As a result of these mystical writings, Drs. Slamet Muljono credits Hamka, saying that Hamka should be considered as the "Hamzah Fansuri of our time."⁴⁷

Besides prose, Hamka wrote poetry, but not in the mystical style of Hamzah Fansūrī or his contemporaries. With regard to Hamzah's views on mysticism, Hamka very skeptical:

His Sufism went too far. He was an adherent of the doctrine of al-Hallāj with his *anā al-ḥaqq* (I am the truth). His Sufism, the *wujūdiyyah*, teaches the unity between Creator and creature. The advocates of this doctrine did not have the mentality to rebel against foreign domination and colonialism. This was in contrast with the spirit of *jihād* as a doctrine taught by Islam which was badly needed in Aceh. In the time of Sultan Iskandar Tsani [1636-41] the struggle ... reached its highest point. In the end Hamzah was killed because his doctrine was very dangerous [to the Muslim masses].⁴⁸

Hamka is also known for his special interest in history. He chose a historical approach for many of his writings. Such an approach can be found in his autobiographical works like *Kenang-Kenangan Hidup* (The Memories of Life) and *Ajahku* (My Father); as well as in the historical works such as his lengthy works, *Sejarah Ummat Islam* (History of the Muslim Community), *Dari Perbendaharaan Lama* (From the Old Heritage) and *Antara Fakta dan Khayal "Taunku Rao"* (Between Fact and Fiction "Sir Rao").

The *Sejarah Ummat Islam* is an impressive historical work that was first published in 1949 in four, large volumes. It recounts a chronological sequence of historical events in Islamic history. This work is written in narrative style which readers find easy to comprehend. The last part of this work is devoted to a history of early Islam in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago. The nine saints of Java and

their miraculous stories are discussed in detail. This work also gives some emphasis to the arrival of Europeans, especially the Dutch and Portuguese, who were interested in politics, trade and Christian missionary work in the Malay-Indonesian world. The records of Maratam kingdom (Central Java) which was ruled by Sultan Agung between 1613 and 1643, and his court scribes are mentioned in some detail. However, a strange attitude is shown by Hamka when he does not mention Hamzah Fansuri by name. This important historical work was republished by Pustaka Antara, Kuala Lumpur, 1965, in a combined edition of four different volumes published by different publishers in Indonesia. Each volume was reprinted several times between 1950 and 1970.

Dari Perbendaharaan Lama as a compilation of the articles on Islamic history of Indonesia, a work that was originally published in 1955. In this work Hamka narrates the struggle of Islam in Indonesia; a brief reference is made to Hamzah Fansuri as a mystical figure whose mystical ideas were attacked by Nur al-Din al-Ranīrī.

Hamka gathers all available data and then gives his own analysis at the end. This approach was the method employed by Ibn Khaldūn to which Hamka admits trying to follow.⁴⁹ However, Hamka has been criticized for seldom mentioning his sources and, in narrative, being less than critical about what is narrated.⁵⁰ From a different perspective, Hamka was exploring a different kind of History and for different

reasons. His historical works are lively and always have the practical goal of teaching something to the readers. Therefore, to judge him by a modern standard of historical writing would be unfair. It was the practice of classical writers who used this methodology to mention their sources in the body of writing, not, of course, through modern footnote formats. This does not mean that they were not careful about crediting their ideas. Hamka's historical writings must be understood in the context of his own purpose, his intended audience, as well as the above perspective.⁵¹

The Japanese Invasion

1942 was a critical point in Indonesian history. The Japanese army landed on Medan soil. The life of the people of Medan was greatly changed. Many of their customary activities were banned. The Magazine *Pedoman Masyarakat*, edited by Hamka, was banned. In fact, any sort of organization and association was banned altogether. The people of Medan were forced to participate in the fulfillment of the Japanese dream of controlling Asia, which was summed up in the slogan, "Asia is for Asians" or "Asia Raya".⁵²

In 1944, Hamka, who was still a leader of the Muhammadiyah in Medan, was appointed by the Japanese authorities as chairman of the local organization of Muslim

'ulamā', *Syu Sangi Kai*, or *Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat* (DPR, People's Representative Council). Hamka's job was to advise the Japanese on issues pertaining to Muslims and Islam. Hamka's association with the Japanese earned him the epithet "*anak emas*" (golden son). As a result he was much disliked by the people, and many saw him as a Japanese agent and even accused him of being a traitor.⁵³

This led to the gradual elimination of Hamka's role in the Muhammadiyah at Medan. In a very emotional meeting, he was dismissed from the leadership of the Medan Muhammadiyah. In 1945, he left Medan to return to his birthplace, Padang Panjang, where he resumed the directorship of *Kulliyatul Muballighīn*⁵⁴ until 1949, a post he had briefly held before he left for Medan. Those years as director provided ample opportunity for Hamka to write and rewrite some of his books and articles. He wrote *Negara Islam* (Islamic State), *Islam dan Demokrasi* (Islam and Democracy), *Merdeka* (Freedom), *Revolusi Pikiran* (Revolution of Thought), *Revolusi Agama* (Religious Revolution), *Adat Minangkabau Menghadapi Revolusi* (Minangkabau Adat Facing Revolution), *Dari Lembaga Cita-Cita* (From the Principle of Hope), *Sejarah Ummat Islam* (History of Islamic Community), and his own autobiography, *Kenang-Kenangan Hidup*, which was first published in 1950 when he was in Jakarta.⁵⁵

Kenang-kenangan Hidup is a comprehensive autobiography. It contains four parts: first is Hamka's

childhood and education until his marriage in 1929. The second part starts with 1928, the year he started his professional career in journalism, and ends with 1942, the year when the Dutch colonial government surrendered to the Japanese. The third part covers the period of 1942 to 1945. 1945 marks the Japanese surrender and the beginning of the Indonesian revolution, struggle for self-governing. The last part records the struggle of Indonesia and the recognition by the Dutch of Indonesia as a sovereign state in 1949.

This period was a time of "physical revolution" in Indonesia. The Indonesians fought against both the Japanese and the Dutch colonial governments. Therefore many of Hamka's books written during that time had political overtones, and were intended to clarify the purpose of independence, foster national unity, and above all, define the roles of all Indonesians. Adat functionaries, religious groups, and nationalists were all advised to step out of their own "group shells" and become concerned with national interests in order to support the common struggle for independence.⁵⁶

Adat Minangkabau Menghadapi Revolusi, which Hamka wrote from 1945 to 1948 in Pandang Panjang, is an uncompromising criticism of the practice of *adat* in Minangkabau. It fired up much anger among *adat* functionaries, but Hamka's criticisms rest on an Islamic foundation and were met with little effective opposition.⁵⁷ In his later books, such as

Islam dan Adat Minangkabau, Hamka toned down his attacks on *adat*, and instead stressed the slogan "*Adat bersendikan Syara' , Syara' bersendikan Kitābullāh*" (*Adat* which based on Islamic law, Islamic law based on the book of Allah [al-Qur'ān]). Anything outside these boundaries is "*adat Jāhiliyyah*" (*adat* of the pre-Islamic era) which must be rejected.⁵⁸ This shift in paradigm may be due to the ineffectiveness of the direct attack approach which only caused animosity toward Hamka. As we can observe in this more subtle way of criticizing *adat*, Hamka was trying to bridge the gap between *adat* and Islam. Also, he was gaining more ground for his future endeavors in Islamic *da'wah*.

In those difficult years after having been spurned by the people of Medan, Hamka still supported and was directly involved in the struggle for independence. He was directly engaged in the fight to prevent the return of the Dutch colonial government to Minangkabau. In 1947 he was appointed the leader of *Front Pertahan Nasional* (FPN, National Defense Front) which was involved in the armed struggle against the Dutch.⁵⁹

Jakarta: 1950-1981

After the war against the Dutch was over, a new independent Indonesia emerged. The combined leadership of Sukarno and Hatta was restored. Hamka then pondered upon his own future and the role that he would be able to play in the

development of a new Indonesia. At the age of forty-two, he kept asking himself, "*Di manakah tempat saya?*" (Where is my place? or, What is my role?) in the Indonesian national theater. It was a question that required deep inner self-reflection: he was from an 'ulamā' family; the books he wrote were all religious in nature; the speeches that he delivered, even during the emergency period, were all religiously inspired. In short, Hamka was centered around Islam and the Islamic way of life. He therefore determined that his role in the new Indonesia should be religious in nature and related to Islam.⁶⁰

In the environment of new Indonesia, a bigger stage was erected on which to explore what he could do best and to what he could contribute the most. As a result, in December 1949, Hamka moved to Jakarta, the capital of the new Indonesian Republic. Not long after Hamka arrived in Jakarta he was offered a job as a journalist with the newspaper *Merdeka* (Freedom) a newspaper and with the weekly magazine, *Pemadangan* (Perspective). A journalist of his calibre does not take long to recapture popularity among Indonesians. During that time he was also able to complete and publish the biography of his father, *Ayahku* (My Father), his own autobiography *Kenang-Kenangan Hidup, Perkembangan Tasauif dari Abad ke Abad, Riwayat Perjalanannya ke Negeri-Negeri Islam* (The Record of His Travel to Islamic Countries), *Empat Bulan di Amerika* (Four Months in America), a book about his

observations of American society written after he was sponsored by the United States State Department for a visit in 1952.⁶¹

In 1956 Hamka published another book on Islam and its teachings: *Pelajaran Agama Islam* (The Lessons of Religion of Islam). This book is concerned specifically with the principles of *īmān* (Islamic faith) and '*amal ṣāleḥ* (righteous deeds). The subject matter is discussed in a discursive manner, making use of Hamka's own experiences. Hamka uses phenomenology to explain the above principles in the context of human experience. For example, the concept of God is described using the sense of beauty and by contemplating the universe. The rotation of day and night and the beauty of the sun, moon and the stars, and the ocean all point to a single creator, God.

In Jakarta, Hamka was appointed to several advisory positions, among them Advisor to the *Departmen Agama* (The Department of Religion), Cultural advisor for the Ministry of Education and Culture, and professor of Islamic Journalism at the Islamic University in Makassar. He became a central figure at the Al-Azhar Mosque, named after the Muslim University in Egypt from which, in 1958, Hamka received an Honorary Doctorate.⁶² Al-Azhar mosque, situated in a middle class neighborhood in Jakarta, is not only a place of worship but also a centre for social activities. It contained a general library, a medical center, the office of

the Islamic publishing house *Panji Masyarakat*, lecture halls, and rooms for martial arts.⁶³ This mosque was also the birth place of Hamka's masterpiece, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, which began as a series of morning lectures on *tafsīr*. They were then compiled and rewritten to become the highly-regarded *Tafsīr al-Azhar*.

In 1955 Hamka was forced once again into practical politics, an area in which he was hesitant to be involved. He was a prominent member of the Islamic political party *Masyumi* (*Majlis Syūrā Muslim Indonesia*; Consultative Council of Muslim Indonesia). From 1954 to 1959 he was an elected member of parliament on the *Masyumi* ticket. During his term of office, Hamka and his fellow *Masyumi* members were trying to impart an Islamic identity to Indonesia. They proposed that Indonesian society should be based on Islam because the Muslims of Indonesia had in the past played vital roles in the struggle for independence.⁶⁴

In 1960 *Masyumi* was banned by President Sukarno, who had just introduced the new system of government known as *Demokrasi Terpimpin* (Guided Democracy).⁶⁵ However, PKI soon got a firm hold on the Government. Gradually PKI forced such Indonesian national policies as guided democracy and *Pancasila* to be replaced with *Nasakom*: Nasional, Agama Komunis (National, Religion and Communism).⁶⁶ As a result of PKI support, Sukarno became stronger. Hamka, as a religious leader, disagreed with PKI on many issues, and it must have

been unresolved ideological differences that prompted PKI to launch a campaign against Hamka. Beginning in 1962, The *Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat*, the cultural section of PKI, launched a character assassination campaign against Hamka. They charged that Hamka's famous novel, *Tenggelamnya Kapal van der Wijck*, was plagiarized from the work of Egyptian novelist Muṣṭafā Luṭfī al-Manfaluty. This charge against Hamka was politically motivated in order to undermine his influence. Modern scholars such as Jūnus Amīr Hamzah and Steenbrink have concluded that Hamka's novel was written in a total Indonesian context and was even to some degree autobiographical, which was not characteristic of al-Manfaluty's writings.⁶⁷

In 1964 Hamka was arrested on a false accusation: he and his colleagues in *Masyumi* were charged with plotting to assassinate President Sukarno.⁶⁸ However, Hamka was released in 1966 after the *Orde Baru* (new order) of President Suharto came into effect. Those years in prison proved to be a blessing, for they limited Hamka's involvement in society and provided him ample time to concentrate on his writing. In his view, it was "*ḥikmat Ilāhi*" (Divine wisdom) that allowed him to work and write in prison.⁶⁹ In this period he completed two books, one masterpiece, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, and *Antara Fakta dan Khayal "Tuaku Rao"* (Between Fact and Fiction in "Tuaku Rao"), an anti-thesis regarding the *Tuaku Rao*, a historical book about the *padri* movement.⁷⁰

From 1966 on, after Hamka was released, he was again the grand *imām* of *al-Azhar* mosque, chairman of Muhammadiyah, and professor at several Islamic Universities, but most of his time was devoted to *Panji Masyarakat*, the last weekly magazine that he started and directed in his lifetime. At the peak of its circulation it had 40,000 subscribers all over Indonesia.

In 1975 Hamka was appointed as chairman of *Majlis 'Ulamā' Indonesia* (MUI, Council of Islamic Scholars of Indonesia), a post he held until two months before his death when he withdrew because of a controversial *fatwā* (legal pronouncement) prohibiting Muslims from attending Christmas celebrations.⁷¹ In short, during those years in MUI there were at least two major issues which dominated the social, political and religious discourse for Hamka. The first was the Christian missionary attempts to christianize Indonesia, and the second was the resurgence of the *aliran kepercayaan* and the *kebatinan* (a group, especially in central Java, whose mystical beliefs are based on a mixture of Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, and animism).⁷² In an effort to explain these beliefs, Hamka wrote, *Perkembangan Kebatinan di Indonesia* (The Development of Kebatinan in Indonesia). Here Hamka elaborates on strategies for the Muslim preacher dealing with *kebatinan*.⁷³

On July 24, 1981, after a long bout with diabetes, Hamka passed away at the age of seventy-three.⁷⁴ He left

behind ten children, many grandchildren and several adopted children whom he considered his "eleventh children."

Concluding Remarks

Hamka's life and works reflect his extensive efforts to reform both Minangkabau and Indonesian societies. His life was dedicated to the Islamic *da'wah*. His writings contain criticisms of adat practices in Minangkabau society and of syncretic practices in Indonesia in general. If we were to compare Hamka and his father, Hamka's approach is more subtle, more tolerant and evolutionary, in contrast to his father's more robust and uncompromising approach. Writing over one hundred books, Hamka untiringly educated the people of Indonesia about the pristine state of Islam, an Islam compatible with modern Indonesia.

All of Hamka's writings are about Islam or related to Islam. His novels, for example, always contain Islamic messages, as Poeradisastra says, "*dalam karya sastra pun berdakwah*" (in literary writings still preaching). Therefore, it is not an exaggeration to say that Hamka's literary writings and novels create a new genre which places a heavy emphasis on religion. Hamka wrote in a sentimental style and introduced many characters which were used to illustrate religious teachings.

It is interesting to observe that Hamka was not called *kiai* (title given to religious scholar), a very highly

regarded religious title in Indonesian society. This is for two reasons: first, Hamka never had *pesantren* (traditional Islamic school) education. Second, most of his writings are not concerned with jurisprudence, a matter of course in the *pesantren* system of education.

Hamka considered *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, as a tool for the purification of Islam in Indonesia. This work can be included in the general genre of those modern *tafsīrs* that address local social problems. However, Hamka's *tafsīr* is unique in the context of the Malay-Indonesian world, in that local materials are used to explain the verses of the Qur'ān. Therefore, it reflects both the local social setting and socio-political and intellectual currents of his time in which at least two concurrent and perhaps interrelated trends were at their zenith, the reformist and independence movements. Out of all his works *Tafsīr al-Azhar* is the most mature, written during his imprisonment. It is a textual legitimation of his thought and is the reflecting mirror of Hamka's position on issues in twentieth century Indonesia.

ENDNOTES

1. It is reported that during the *padri* war, Tuanku Nan Tuo was entrusted by Tuanku Imam Bonjol to lead the battle against the Dutch to defend two strategic areas, Lawang and Andalas, two gates to the operational center of the movement. Tuanku Nan Tuo was a religious teacher who had *Lebais* (mosque official or learned man in religious matters) and *Tuankus* (religious teachers) as students. He was also a *shaykh* in the *Naqshbandiyah* order. See Hamka, *Ajahku*, pp. 28-38.
2. Hamka, *Ajahku*, p. 43.
2. Ibid., pp. 43-47.
4. Hamka, *Kenang-kenangan Hidup* (Memories of Life) (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbitan Pustaka Antara, 1982).
5. Ibid., p. 2. It has long been a tradition for the Muslims in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago to send their children to Makkah to study Islam. Those who return from Makkah are called *Hajis* (men) and *Hajjahs* (women), and are respected and very highly honored.
6. Hamka, *Kenang-kenangan Hidup*, p. 3.
7. Ibid., p. 4.
8. Ibid., p. 7.
9. Ibid., p. 18
10. Ibid., p. 21.
11. Ibid., p. 23.
12. Ibid., p. 30.
13. Ibid., pp. 32-33. Dr. Rivai was among a Minangkabau who only received western education. He was regarded by many in Sumatra as the first Indonesian in the modern period who had the courage to fight against the injustices of Dutch colonial government. He voiced his concerns in the progressive magazine, *Bintang Hindia*, published in the early

years of the twentieth century. Despite his meaningful contributions, the people of Sumatra were ambivalent towards him. This is because he was western-educated and married to a Christian Dutch woman. He was a victim of the controversy between the western-educated and traditionalists. For a detailed account of Dr. Rivai, see Parada Harahap, *Riwayat Dr. A. Rivai* (Medan: Indische Drukkerij, 1939).

14. Hamka, *Kenang-kenangan Hidup*, p. 13.

15. Ibid., p. 33. The divorce of his parents took its toll on Hamka. For at least one year he was depressed and disorganized and lost interest in school. As a result he joined *parewa* (as for *parewa*, see note 44, Chapter 3).

16. For a detailed discussion on the compatibility and incompatibility of adat practices with those of Islam, see Hamka, *Islam dan Adat Minangkabau* (Jakarta: Pustaka Panjimas, 1985).

17. As a scholar in Minangkabau, Sheykh Ibrāhīm Mūsā took a leading role in changing the teaching techniques and subject matter used in the Islamic schools. For the biography of Shaykh Ibrāhīm Mūsā see Akhria Nazwar, *Shekh Ahmad Khatib: Ilmuan Islam di Permulaan Abad ini* (Sheykh Ahmad Khatib: Islamic Scholar in the Beginning of this Century) (Jakarta: Pustaka Panjimas, 1983), pp. 79-82.

18. Hamka, *Kenang-kenangan Hidup*, pp. 40, 45.

19. Ibid., p. 46.

20. See the discussion of *Sarekat Islam* in Chapter 3.

21. Hamka, *Kenang-kenangan Hidup*, pp., 54-55. *Jong Islamieten Bond* (JIB) was an organization of western-educated intellectuals who were sympathetic to Islam; it was established in 1925 as an offshoot of the Jong Jawa Association for the purpose of deepening knowledge and practice of Islam. They were, however, generally tolerant toward other religions. But sometimes, as Steenbrink puts it, "agitated strongly against Catholic and Protestant missions both outside and inside the people's council." JIB published *al-Nur* (The Light), a periodical aimed at disseminating the ideas of the organization and published counter attacks against the Christian missionaries. The JIB later became an important training ground for the leaders of *Masyumi*. Among its members were Kasman Singoimedjo, Muhammad Roem, A.R. Baswedan, and Haji Agus Salim. See Muhammad Roem, "Jong Islamieten Bond Yang Saya Alami," *Panji Masyarakat*, vol. 23, no. 348 (1982): pp. 208-222; K.

Steenbrink, *Dutch Colonialism and Indonesian Islam*, pp. 111, 136-138.

22. Hamka, *Kenang-Kenangan Hidup*, pp. 56-7.

23. Ibid., p. 57.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid., p. 47.

26. Anthony Reid, *The Blood of the People* (Oxford: University Press, 1979), p. 38.

27. Hamka, *Kenang-Kenangan Hidup*, pp. 58-9.

28. Ibid., p. 58.

29. Ibid., pp. 59-63.

30. Ibid., pp. 87-9.

31. Ibid., p. 81.

32. Ibid., p. 85.

33. Ibid., pp. 88-9.

34. For a complete list of Hamka's works, see Mohamed bin Abas, *Hamka: A Bibliography of the Works of Prof. Dr. Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah* (Sydney: BISA [Bibliographic Information on Southeast Asia], 1983), Microfiche. For the bibliography of Hamka arranged according to field of study, see H. Yunus Amirhamzah, *Hamka Sebagai Pengarang Roman* (Hamka: a Novelist), 2d ed. (Jakarta: Pustaka Sari Indah, 1993), Appendix, pp. 55-59.

35. Hamka, *kenang-kenangan Hidup*, pp. 104-5.

36. This first novel is a true love story based on the experience of a young couple in Sungai Batang (part of Minangkabau). The novel was enriched by the imagination of Hamka. See Hamka, *Kenang-Kenangan Hidup*, pp. 93, 137. See also Rusydi Hamka, *Pribadi dan Martabat Buya Prof. Dr. Hamka* (The Personality and the Status of Buya Prof. Dr. Hamka), 2d ed. (Jakarta: Pustaka Panjimas, 1983), p. 40. For a critique of Hamka's novels, see A. Teeuw, *Modern Indonesian Literature*, vol. i (Leiden: KITLV, 1979), pp. 69-72; "Hamka Di-nilai Sa-mula" (Hamka in Retrospective), *Dewan Bahasa* 10 (May 1966): pp. 196-203; See also Yunus AmirHamzah, *Hamka Sebagai Pengarang Roman*, 1993; Marwan Sarijo, "Mengerling

Hamka Lewat Roman-Romannya" (Knowing Hamka from His Novels), in *Kenang-Kenangan 70 Tahun Buya Hamka*, pp. 326-337.

37. Rusydi, *Pribadi Hamka*, p. 3.

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid.

40. M. Yunan Nasution, Hamka's co-editor and the author of the *Pedoman Masyarakat*, commented that Medan and the *Pedoman Masyarakat* were two important factors in the development of Hamka's scholarship. With them, Hamka's reputation was known all over Indonesia; without them M.Y. Nasution speculated that Hamka would have remained a religious teacher in the Muhammadiyah School. See M. Yunan Nasution, "Hamka Sebagai Pengarang dan Pujangga," in *Kenang-Kenangan 70 Tahun*, p. 43.

41. This novel was published for the first time in 1936. It is a sentimental story about a young man forced to leave his lover because of adat. Heartbroken, he seeks refuge in Makkah near the Ka'bah where he finally dies.

42. This novel is one of his many writings criticizing the practice of adat in Minangkabau. It derives from Hamka's experience in Makassar. It is the story of Zaynuddin who, according to the adat of Minangkabau, is called an *anak pisang* (literally "banana son"), meaning that he is the son of an inter-ethnic marriage between a man from Minangkabau and a woman from Makassar. Because of adat, Zaynuddin cannot marry the woman he loves. Frustrated, he exiles himself to Java, where he becomes popular for his short stories. For a perspective of its literary status and controversy see Yunus AmirHamzah, *Hamka Sebagai Pengarang Roman*, pp. 29-36.

43. This novel was first published in 1939 by Jayabakti. It is a rather different kind of novel but with the same critical overtones regarding Minangkabau society. Again it stresses the disastrous economic consequences of Minangkabau adat as it functions in society. Consider the story of a Minangkabau boy who emigrates to Medan to become a peddler. While still very poor, he marries a Javanese girl. The marriage produces more prosperity and their economic conditions improve. Both become successful traders. The young man visits his birth place but finds no place to live except the mosque because he had not married a woman of his own *suku* (tribe) in Minangkabau. Following the practice of adat, he takes a second wife. Consequently, his first marriage ends in divorce. His commerce then collapses and he returns to Minangkabau a broken man.

44. It was first published in 1939. This novel deals with the contrasting character of businessmen for whom success can only be measured in the form of money and Pak Jasin, the simple and pious Muslim who tries to build a *merdeka* society (Free Society) in which people are free from any bondage of superstitions. Pak Jasin is, in the end, not only economically better off but morally correct, in contrast to the *Tuan Direktur* (The Manager) who is caught up in superstition and therefore becomes economically bankrupt.

45. Hamka, *Tasauif Moderen*, 12th ed. (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1970), p. 20.

46. This book is actually a combination of two books on mysticism that he wrote in the 1950's. Those two books are *Perkembangan Tasauif dari Abad ke Abad* (The Development of Mysticism from Century to Century), first published in 1952, and *Mengembalikan Tasauif ke Pangkalnya* (Returning Mysticism to Its Origin) which was originally an inaugural address delivered at The State Teacher Training College of Yogyakarta in 1958.

47. Hamka, *Tasauif Moderen*, p. xix.

48. Hamka, *Sejarah Ummat Islam*, 3d ed. (Bukittinggi: Nusantara, 1961), p. 899.

49. Hamka, *Antara Fakta dan Khayal*, p. 99.

50. Karel Steenbrink, "Hamka (1908-1981) and the Integration of the Islamic Ummah of Indonesia," *Studia Islamika* 1, no. 3 (1994): p. 12.

51. For a study of Hamka's approach to history, see Deliar Noer, "Hamka dan Sejarah" (Hamka and History) in Panitia Peringatan, *Kenang-Kenangan 70 Tahun*, pp. 169-188.

52. Hamka, *Kenang-Kenangan Hidup*, p. 195

53. Ibid., p. 250, see also, Fakhry Ali, "Hamka dan Masyarakat," p. 475; Rusydi, *Pribadi Hamka*, p. 39.

54. See, Agus Hakim, "Kuliyatul Muballighīn Muhammadiyah dan Buaya Hamka," in *Kenang-Kenangan 70 Tahun*, pp. 72-101.

55. Hamka, *Mutiara Falsafat* (The Pearl of Philosophy), 2d. ed. (Jakarta: Widjaya, 1956), p. 8. This book is a collection of four smaller books: *Tasauif Modern*; *Falsafah Hidup*; *Lembaga Hidup* (The Principle of Life); and *Lembaga Budi* (The Principles of Ethics). See also, Hamka, *Kenang-Kenangan Hidup*, p. 340; H. Agus Hakim, "Kuliyatul

Muballighīn," p. 99; Yunan Yusof, *Corak Pemikiran Kalam*, pp. 46-7.

56. See, Hamka, *Kenang-Kenangan Hidup*, pp. 325-328, 340. See also, Fakhry Ali, "Hamka dan Masyarakat," p. 57.

57. For a detailed discussion of adat in Minangkabau, see Dr. Hamka Datuk Indomo, *Islam dan Adat Minangkabau* (Jakarta: Pustaka Panjimas, 1984).

58. In his new and more pragmatic way of approaching adat problems, Hamka argued for a compromise between adat and Islamic law that permitted the traditional collective possessions of a family, especially the land and house, to be inherited according to the traditional matrilineal lines. But all goods acquired by the couple during the marriage are to be divided according to Islamic law. Although this still deviates from the traditional Islamic law of inheritance, this *ijtihād* is a practical solution for the situation in Minangkabau. See Hamka, *Adat Minangkabau Menghadapi Revolusi* (Jakarta: Tekad, 1963); see also Amir Syarifuddin, *Perlaksanaan Hukum Kewarisan Islam dalam Lingkungan Adat Minangkabau* (The Application of Islamic Law of Inheritance in the Environment of Minangkabau Adat) (Jakarta: Gunung Agung, 1984).

59. S.M. Rashid, "Kenang-Kenangan Bekerja Sama Hamka" (The Experience of Working with Hamka), in *Kenang-Kenangan 70 Tahun*, p. 21. The dramatic days as head of the FPN (Front Pertahanan Nasional), fighting against the Dutch colonial government in Minangkabau, are recorded in Hamka's autobiography, *Kenang-Kenangan Hidup*, pp. 337-511. See also Rusydi, *Pribadi Hamka*, p. 109.

60. See Hamka, *Kenang-Kenangan Hidup*, pp. 506-510.

61. Hamka, *Mutiara Falsafat*, p. 8. See also Yunan Yusof, *Corak Pemikiran Kalam*, p. 48.

62. On that occasion, Hamka delivered a speech which was later published under the title of *Pengaruh Muḥammad 'Abduh di Indonesia* (The Influence of Muḥammad 'Abduh in Indonesia) (Jakarta: Titimas, 1961).

63. For a detailed discussion of the functions of the mosque as a center of social, religious, political and cultural activities, see Sidi Gazalba, *Masjid Pusat Ibadat dan Kebudayaan* (The Mosque as Center of Worship and Culture) (Jakarta: Bulan Bintang, 1962).

64. Yunan Yusof, *Corak Pemikiran Kalam*, p. 48.

65. For a detailed discussion of the term "guided democracy," see Deliar Noer, *Partai Islam di Pentas Nasional 1945-1965*, (Islamic Party on the National Stage 1945-1965) (Jakarta: Pustaka Utama Grafiti, 1987), pp. 349-424 passim.

66. For an analysis of the Indonesian political situation at that time, see Ali Murtopo, *Strategi Politik Nasional* (National Political Strategy) (Jakarta: Yayasan Proklamasi CSIS, 1974).

67. For a detailed discussion of the alleged plagiarism, see Yunus AmirHamzah, *Tenggelamnya Kapal Van De Wikj dalam Polemik*, (The Foundering of Van de Wikj: A polemic) (Jakarta: Megabookstore, 1963). See also, Teeuw, *Modern Indonesian Literature*, pp. 70-71; "Hamka Di-nilai Sa-mula," pp. 198, 200.

68. There were two other *Masyumi* members who were arrested together with Hamka, Isa Anshary and Burhanuddin Harahap. A vivid description of Hamka's life during detention and interrogation can be found in Rusydi, *Pribadi Hamka*, appendix i, "Catatan dalam Tahanan Regim Sukarno" (The Records of Detention During the Sukarno Regime), pp. 237-263.

69. Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, vol. 1, p. 50.

70. Mochtar Naim, "Catatan dari Tiga Seminar" (A Record from Three Seminars) in *Kenang-Kenangan 70 Tahun*, pp. 194-97.

71. Yunan Yusof, *Corak Pemikiran Kalam*, p. 52. A detailed discussion of the prohibition to celebrate Christmas appears in Chapter 5.

72. These two issues are crucial in Javanese society. Many still practice a mixture of traditional Javanese religion and Islam, especially the *Abangan* group. The term "Abangan Muslim" is applied to the syncretists in contrast to *santri* Muslims, who are orthodox Sunni Muslim. See Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed*, pp. 65-70. See also, M. Rasjidi, *Mengapa Aku Tetap Memeluk Agama Islam?* (Why am I Still Embracing Islam?) (Jakarta, 1968).

73. Hamka's hard and uncompromising stand against Christianity in Indonesia was not surprising considering his activities and involvement in the Muhammadiyah and other reform movements that opened his eyes to the activities of the missionaries. See Hamka, *Perkembangan Kebatinan*, p. 91.

74. Rusydi, *Pribadi Hamka*, p. 230.

CHAPTER 5

TAFSĪR AL-AZHAR: ITS LITERARY STRUCTURE AND ROLE AS A MIRROR OF SOCIAL CHANGE IN TWENTIETH CENTURY INDONESIA

Introductory Remarks

The purpose of this chapter is to probe two major areas: first, *Tafsīr al-Azhar* and its literary structure and status in the genre of *tafsīr* in Indonesia, and second, *tafsīr* as a socio-religious literary work which reflects the personality and thought patterns of the writer. Hamka's work is the product of his environment. *Tafsīr al-Azhar* is a product of twentieth century Indonesia. As an independent reformist, Hamka took a bold stand against colonialism during the period of the struggle for independence against the Dutch and Christian missionaries. His efforts were landmark achievements in the reform struggle in Indonesia.

Literary Structure of *Tafsīr al-Azhar*

It is almost impossible to comprehend the wisdom and experience of a lifetime captured in the masterpiece of *Tafsīr al-Azhar*. It is a storehouse of knowledge which continues to be a resource for students of the Qur'anic and social sciences, especially for those in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago. A morning series of lectures (*kuliah subuh*) given by Hamka in the al-Azhar mosque in Jakarta from 1959 to 1964 were published in *Gema Islam* (The Voice of

Islam), a journal which was previously suppressed by the Dutch colonial government. The reappearance of *Panji Masyarakat* served as a spiritual rejuvenation for Muslims in Indonesia.¹

Hamka's arrest on January 27, 1964 provided an opportunity to undertake a Qur'anic commentary. While he was in prison, he wrote the first draft of *Tafsīr al-Azhar*.² He corrected and improved his first draft during the first few months following his eventual release.

History of Writing

The possibility that Hamka would be unable to complete the entire commentary on the Qur'ān within his lifetime, prompted him to initiate his commentary with *Sūrat al-Mu'minūn* (23), not *Sūrat al-Baqarah* (2).³ Realizing the unpredictable nature of existence, Hamka attempted to complete his Qur'anic commentary during his lifetime. Unlike other renowned authors whose works were completed by a devoted disciple, Hamka's *tafsīr* was completed by him.

Several factors motivated Hamka to write *tafsīr*. He realized the impending importance of nurturing the enthusiasm⁴ of the youth in the Malay speaking world in the faith of Islam. This initially was the basic reasoning for beginning his writing of *Tafsīr al-Azhar*. Unfortunately, the youth of Indonesia who aspired to learn more about Islam were impeded by a lack of knowledge of the Arabic language.

Thus his *tafsīr*, written in Indonesian, made Islam more easily understood. Obviously, his *tafsīr* assisted them in their own language. Hamka uses the metaphor, "*Rumah telah kelihatan jalan ke sana tidak tahu*" (The house is already in sight, but not knowing the way to get there), to justify the need of having his Qur'anic commentary in the Malay-Indonesian language.⁵

Another reason for writing the *tafsīr* was his desire to increase the effective delivery of the *muballigh* and the *dā'i* (preacher) from the Arabic resources which would be able to supplement their understanding of Islam.⁶ There were some practices of Islam during this period which were more or less ritualistic, and therefore did not offer the pursuer a deeper insight into the faith or the opportunity to expand his or her intimate knowledge. Facing the difficulty of providing a comprehensive, practical religious inspiration, he focused on rooting out the distortions and misinformation about Islam, and the problem of belief in superstition and innovation (*bid'ah*).

Sources and Method of *Tafsīr al-Azhar*

Some of the primary sources of Hamka's *tafsīr* are:

Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl al-Qur'ān by Abū Ja'far Muḥammad Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 923); *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr* by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1209); *al-Jāmi' li al-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* by Abū 'Abdullāh Muḥammad Ibn Aḥmad al-Anṣārī al-Qurṭubī (d.

1273); *al-Kashshāf 'an Ḥaqā'iq al-Tanzīl wa 'Uyūn al-Aqāwīl fi Wujūh al-Ta'wīl* by Abū al-Qāsim Jār Allāh Maḥmūd Ibn 'Umar al-Zamakhsharī (d. 1144, representing the Mu'tazilah school of thought); *Madārik al-Tanzīl* of Abū 'Abdullāh al-Nasafī (d.1245); *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm* by al-Qurayshī al-Dimashqī 'Imād al-Dīn Abī al-Fida' Ismā'īl Ibn Kathīr (d. 1373); *Lubāb al-Ta'wīl fī Ma'ānī al-Tanzīl* of al-Khāzin (d. 1373); *Tafsīr al-Manār* of Shaykh Muḥammad 'Abduh (d. 1905) and Rashīd Riḍa; *Tafsīr al-Jawāhir fi Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* of Shaykh Ṭanṭawī al-Jawharī (d. 1939); *al-Mizān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* of Sayyid Muḥammad Husayn Ṭabaṭṭabā'ī (d. 1981, representing the Shī'i school of thought); *Tafsīr fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān* of Sayyid Quṭb (d. 1966); *Tafsīr al-Furqān* of Aḥmad Ḥassan or Tuan Ḥassan Bangil (d. 1958); and *Al-Qur'ān dan Terjemahan* of Religions Department Republic of Indonesia.⁷

Knowing his love for knowledge, his sons and his wife scanned the existing libraries and all available special books of interest for him during his period of incarceration.⁸ As for the secondary sources Hamka used many other books on the science of Qur'ān, *asbāb al-nuzūl* (the occasions of revelation), Arabic lexicons and books on theology, philosophy, jurisprudence and mysticism that were highlighted in the works of classical and modern scholars.

From the list of his references, it is apparent that Hamka was trying to be more objective and more comprehensive

in his commentary. He not only combined classical and modern *tafsīrs* but also drew on Sunni, Mu'tazili and Shī'ī *tafsīrs*. Therefore, *Tafsīr al-Azhar* is a combination of these classical and modern *tafsīrs* and more importantly Hamka's own ideas and experiences. Hamka states:

The commentator [Hamka] carefully preserved the relationships between *naql* (transmitted text) and *akal* ('*aql*, reason and the use of reason in interpreting the sacred texts); *riwāyah* (tradition) and *dirāyah* (reasoning). The author cultivated a juxtaposed relationship of the previous scholars with noteworthy observations and his personal experiences. He did this without marginalizing the opinions of previous scholars. A *tafsīr* that relied on previous scholars' opinions is only "textbook thinking"⁹. And oximoratically, an author who relied on his own singular reasoning stands in great danger of overstepping the limits of religion.¹⁰

This statement unveils the methodological framework of *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, which tries to balance *tafsīr al-dirāyah* and *tafsīr al-riwāyah* and classical and modern *tafsīrs*. Also, it is further enhanced with his own insights into Indonesian life and society. Looked at from a methodological viewpoint, *Tafsīr al-Azhar* is modeled after the *Tafsīr al-Manār* of Rashīd Riḍā, who based his *tafsīr* on the methodology propounded by his teacher, Shaykh Muḥammad 'Abduh. *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, like *Tafsīr al-Manār*, covers a wide range of subjects such as *ḥadīth*, *fiqh*, history, politics, social issues of the time and modern science. Hamka also admitted to have been influenced by at least two other *tafsīrs* : *Tafsīr al-Marāghī* by Aḥmad Mustafā al-Marāghī (d.

1945) and *Maḥāsin al-Ta'wīl* of Muḥammad Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī (d. 1914).¹¹

Tafsīr al-Azhar begins with a discussion of the science of the Qur'ān, *i'jāz al-Qur'ān* (inimitability of the Qur'ān), the meaning of the term "Qur'ān" and some discussions of the qualifications and conditions of the Qur'ānic commentator. In addition, Hamka specifies the direction and the methodological framework of his *tafsīr*. He also explains his choices of references. For example, *Tafsīr al-Manār* and *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān* were preferred over others, for they were equipped with the *riwāyah* and *dirāyah* commentaries, and, perhaps more importantly, contextualized verses of the Qur'ān in the modern socio-political conditions of their time.¹²

In the course of his commentary on the verses of the Qur'ān, Hamka divides his interpretation into several sub-topics, indicating the subject matter of that particular passage of the Qur'ān. From this perspective, *Tafsīr al-Azhar* is very organized. It adopts a somewhat thematic approach to the Qur'ān.

Every *Sūrah* of the Qur'ān is divided into a variety of themes that are addressed in that *Sūrah*. The commentary follows both a thematic structure by discussing the themes of a *Sūrah* and cross-referencing them with similar themes in other *Sūrahs*.¹³ In considering the themes within a given *Sūrah*, Hamka quotes relevant verses from different *Sūrahs*

and traditions to support his interpretation so that it becomes one coherent unit of commentary. To further clarify this point, let us look at an example from *Sūrat al-Qalam* (68). In that *Sūrah*, Hamka divides his interpretation into seven topics: Introduction; Ink and Pen from verse 1- 7; Do not miscalculate from verse 8-16; Ill intention from verse 17-25; Consequences of Wrong Intention from verse 26- 33; A Person Who Enters into the Stomach of Fish from verse 48- 52.¹⁴ By this kind of arrangement, a reader will not be lost in the course of Hamka's commentaries. He or she is guided by the carefully constructed theme(s) that run through the *Sūrah*.

In the introduction to each *Sūrah*, which is usually placed before the opening text for the particular *Sūrah*, a summary of the *Sūrah* is given. It commonly includes a historical background of the *Sūrah*, the relationship with other verses or *Sūrahs* which come before or after, the main message(s) of the *Sūrah*, and sometimes the definitions of some technical terms. These definitions can be extensive and are intended to provide substantial information for interested readers.¹⁵

As for the rest of the commentaries, Hamka follows the thematic flows of messages contained in the *Sūrah*. The meaning of passages will also be discussed according to their propensities. This is why we find theological debates, *fatwā* in jurisprudence, and social implications of the

verses given in the course of his commentary. We see this kind of extensive commentary, for instance, in *Sūrat al-Fātihah* (the Opening *Sūrah*). Hamka devotes forty-six pages of commentary to the seven verses of this *Sūrah*, covering issues of vocabulary, meanings of the verses, applications in jurisprudence, and extensive explanations of Islamic theological concepts. Another classic example of an extensive commentary can be found in *Sūrat al-Jum'ah* (62) which consists of eleven verses. Hamka devotes thirty-five pages to the explanation of seventeen subtopics which generally covered the area of applications in jurisprudence, meanings, and the religious merits of Friday.¹⁶ It must be observed that Hamka tends to go overboard in his commentary. An issue that appears to lie outside the scope of the verse is given too much attention. However, from another perspective, a reader finds in his commentary not only the interpretation of a verse but also references to other side issues covered in more specialized books.

Hamka takes a critical position on the issue of *isra'īliyyāt*. In Hamka's view *isra'īliyyāt* are not confined to the traditions introduced by Jewish converts, but include all stories and myths whose authenticity cannot be proven.¹⁷ He uses *isra'īliyyāt* when it does not contradict other verses of the *Qur'ān*, the authentic traditions of the Prophet or intellectual reasoning. Any contradiction is rejected. For example, the story that the world is placed on

the horn of a cow and that the movement of the cow will cause earthquakes is incomprehensible and contradicts modern science.¹⁸ The story of *al-Gharāniq* is another unfounded case of *isra'īliyyāt* in which the Prophet is alleged to have approved the idols of the Arab pagans.¹⁹ However, Hamka takes an indifferent attitude toward non-doctrinal issues which are not supported or contradicted by the Qur'ān or the *Sunnah*. One such example is narrations about the color of the dog of the people of the cave in *Sūrat al-Kahf* (18) which Hamka holds that Muslims have the liberty to believe or not to believe in them.²⁰

Language of *Tafsīr al-Azhar*

Tafsīr al-Azhar uses the simple, old Malay-Indonesian language which is known as *bahasa Melayu* (Malay language). This is due to the fact that Hamka did not write for the intellectual elite. Had he intended to do so, he would have written in a more difficult language. Rather, he wanted to write for the Malay-Indonesian masses in general. Even though the language is simple, this does not undermine the book's intellectual standard. Hamka is known for making difficult ideas easily understandable using simple and practical language.

Arabic terms are used extensively, and to a lesser degree English and Dutch technical terms are employed. This must have been due to Hamka's own educational background,

which largely centered on religious school, in which Arabic was used. Hamka had a limited modern education, and did not learn Dutch or any other European languages. Still, the *tafsīr* is lucid, easy to understand, very informative, and less dogmatic. The translation of the verses of the Qur'ān is carefully organized so as to represent the real meaning of the Qur'ān.

In sum, *Tafsīr al-Azhar* is an extensive work of Qur'anic commentary which covers non-religious subjects as well as religious ones. This detailed exposition creates the tendency to overstretch the limits and the obvious meanings of the verses. Thus the general reader will be enlightened, but for a learned reader such exposition is unnecessary. Reading *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, one has the impression of reading an Islamic religious book which discusses many pertinent issues in religion. The discussions are well-coordinated and supported by the verses of the Qur'ān and/or the traditions of the Prophet. From this perspective, *Tafsīr al-Azhar* is typical of modern *tafsīr*, especially that of Rashid Riḍā and Muḥammad 'Abduh which contains not only commentaries but also legal judgements, and socio-political and cultural ideas.

Publication

The multi-volume *Tafsīr al-Azhar* was initially written in thirty volumes and corresponded to the *Juz'* (parts) of

the Qur'ān. At the end of each volume Hamka notes the date and the place that volume was written. It was originally published by three different publishers. The first four volumes were published in 1968 by the publisher *Pembimbing Masa* (The Guide of Time), which belonged to Ḥajī Maḥmūd. In 1973, Pustaka Islam in Surabaya, published the thirtieth volume, followed by the fifteenth and the twenty-ninth volumes.

In 1975, the fifth to the fourteenth volumes were published by *Yayasan Nūrul Islām* (The Light of Islam Foundation), a press headed by Hamka's own son, Rusydi Hamka.²¹ After that first publication, the *tafsīr* was published again and again in different editions, in both paperback and hardcover editions. Beginning in 1990, in Singapore, the publisher Pustaka Nasional published a ten-volume compact edition with the sum of more than 8000 pages, each volume consisting of more than six hundred pages. This work is therefore by far the largest ever written in the Malay-Indonesian language by an author in the field of *tafsīr*.

***Tafsīr al-Azhar* as a Mirror of Social Change**

In the following section we will investigate the content of *Tafsīr al-Azhar* and identify it as a reflection of the socio-political and intellectual climate of that time. It is my belief that *Tafsīr al-Azhar* is a mirror of

social change in the twentieth century Indonesia. To investigate this proposition, we will look into some of the major issues that directly or indirectly involved Hamka.

Religious Polemics in Indonesia

In his interpretation of many verses which deal with humanity in general, religious beliefs and the people of the book (Jews and Christians), Hamka was inclined to polemicize on religious differences in his effort to affirm the validity of Islamic faith, but not to the extent of rejecting other religions. He rather advocated religious tolerance. Such an argument can be based on his commentary on *Sūrat al-Baqarah* (2): 120, *Sūrat Āl 'Imrān* (3): 64, *Sūrat al-Mumtahanah* (60): 7-9, and *Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ*.

Sūrat al-Mumtahanah (60): 7 reads:

It may be that Allah will establish friendship between you and those whom ye (now) hold as enemies. For Allah has power (over all things); And Allah is oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

Sūrat al-Mumtahanah (60): 8 reads:

Allah forbids you not, with regard to those who fight you not for (your) faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them: For Allah loveth those who are just.

Sūrat al-Mumtahanah (60): 9 reads:

Allah only forbids you, with regard to those who fight you for (your) faith, and drive you out of your homes, and support (others) in driving you out, from turning to them (for friendship and protection). It is such as turn to them (in these circumstances), that do wrong.

Commenting on these verses, Hamka argues that Muslims must cultivate respect and friendship with those who are kind and just to them. On the other hand, they are commanded to fight in self-defense against those who establish a clear animosity against them. Hamka takes these verses as the bases for religious tolerance, for coexisting in one nation. The interaction must be honest. Hamka notes that this verse is often forgotten even in interaction among the Muslims. The harmonious relationship required by Islam is often neglected, and instead stress is placed on the differences of opinions on the matters of *khilāfiyat* and *furū' iyyāt* (disagreements and branches). This rigidity has often caused Muslims to be fanatical in their sects and beliefs. Hamka uses Indonesian examples of *tarāwīḥ* prayer in the month of Ramaḍān, whether Muslims should pray eleven or twenty-three *raḡ' āt*; and *qunūṭ* (a special supplication made in the second part of the dawn prayer), whether should there be a *qunūṭ* or not in the *ṣalāt Ṣubḥ* (the dawn prayer). These problems were enough to divide the Indonesian Muslims. ²²

Inter-religious tolerance can be present as long as good intentions and mutual respect exist. This interpretation echoes Hamka's experience during the colonial period in which the colonial government worked closely with Christian missionaries. In the above-mentioned situation, the tolerance endorsed in this verse can not be applied. These verses endorse religious tolerance only as it applies

to well-mannered and well-intended people of different religions.²³

Hamka's interpretation of these verses must have been based on his experience with Christian missionaries in Indonesia. This position is reflected in his *fatwā*, issued during his tenure as chairman of the 'Ulamā Council of Indonesia. In that *fatwā* Hamka prohibits the Indonesian Muslims from celebrating Christmas.²⁴ It is therefore a protest against the foreign connection of Christian missionaries and their interference in the internal affairs of Indonesia. A good Christian, in the eyes of Hamka, is the image of Pak Kasimo²⁵ who was ethical person, open-minded and involved in the struggle against the Dutch for Indonesian independence. He deserves respect among the Muslims.²⁶

Sūrat al-Baqarah (2); 120 reads:

Never will Jews or the Christians be satisfied with thee unless thou follow their form of religion. Say: "The Guidance of Allah, -that is the (only) Guidance." Wert thou to follow their desires after the knowledge which hath reached thee, then wouldst thou find neither Protector nor Helper against Allah.

This verse is interpreted to have the message of quieting religious polemics in Indonesia. In 1967, the relationship between Muslim and Christians reached a dangerous point. A Christian missionary was reported to have "*menhina nabi Muḥammad*" (insulted the Prophet Muḥammad). The Muslims responded by burning some churches. One such

incident was in Makasar in October, 1967 when a Christian teacher was reported to have insulted Islam by saying that "Muhammad (the Prophet of Islam) was only married to nine of his wives and lived in adultery with the others."²⁷ It is also reported that "a Christian church has been built opposite the great mosque of Makassar, although practically no Christians live in that area."²⁸ These activities were considered aggressive and provocative by the Muslims and often resulted in open conflict. Such strained relations were also reported in Jakarta, Aceh, and other parts of Indonesia.

As a result of these and other similar incidents, on 30 November 1967 President Suharto organized an inter-religious conference between leaders of all the religions in Indonesia: Muslims, Christians (Protestants and Catholics), Hindus and Buddhists. Muslims delegated, among others, Muhammad Natsir, Dr. Rasyidi, K. H. Fakhri Usman, Prawoto Mangkusasmito, and Hamka. The Christian delegates were T.B. Simatupang, Tanbunan, S.H. Kasimo, and Harry Chan.²⁹ This dialogue aimed to create harmonious living conditions among the religious believers in Indonesia, especially between Christians and Muslims.

This dialogue was organized in conjunction with the establishment of the *Orde Baru* (the New Order) under President Suharto. At the end of the dialogue, a charter was prepared for consideration by the delegates. The Christian

delegates refused to accept it because of one article in the charter that restricted the propagation of a religion to a person who believed in any of the other religions.³⁰ The draft of the charter set principles *modus vivendi* and ethical codes for religious tolerance in Indonesia, specifying that one religious community would not allow the targeting of other religious communities for preaching and conversion.³¹ The Christian leaders felt that the article was unfairly drafted and contested that the charter undermined human freedom. They believed that to deliver the message of Christianity to non-Christians was their sacred duty. The Muslims on the other hand, felt secure with that article because it protected the Muslims from Christian missionaries.

Furthermore, the article was one of three repeatedly suggested by Muslims during these years. The other two articles in some ways expanded the basic demands of the above article. First, every religious group ought to restrict its activities to its own members. Second, competition may indeed take place between Muslims and Christians to convert those people with no adherence to religion, i.e. animists.³² Due to this disagreement, the meeting adjourned without any concrete resolutions. The conflict between Muslims and Christians persists even until today, as similar incidents are reported from time to time in Indonesia.

Of course the clashes were not the result of one-sided provocation, and the Muslims are equally guilty of causing a polemical situation. This situation can be discerned from polemical writings defending Islam that are at the same time targeted against Christianity. These writings argued for example, that "The Qur'ān is a Correction to the Old and New Testament" and "Jesus Christ according to Islam and Christianity." This was argued in a tract by Hasbullah Bakry and was considered offensive by Christians. O. Hashem wrote "A Complete Answer to Rev. Dr. J. Verkuyl." Verkuyl was a Dutch theologian who wrote a pamphlet about Christianity for private use in Christian circles, but the pamphlet was seen by Muslims as an attack on the integrity of Islam.³³ This stream of polemical publications and activities³⁴ by both religious communities from 1962 to 1967 was detrimental to inter-religious life in Indonesia.

On the basis of these experiences, Hamka states that *al-Baqarah* (2): 120 is particularly true that: "the Jews will not be pleased with you, nor will the Christians until you follow their religions." Hamka adds, "it is not a matter of importance for the Jews and the Christians to convert those who have no religion, but it is of great importance to convert Muslims."³⁵ This remark shows the extent and intensity of inter-religious conflict during that period. However, the remark seems to indicate that the Christians and the Jews are one monolithic group that preach the same

message, while in actual reality that is not the case even within Christianity.

Looking at the reality of inter-religious conflict in the second half of the twentieth century in Indonesia, Hamka's explanations reflect Muslim sentiments and psychological states in relation to Christianity. It echoes the sentiments of the unsuccessful dialogue discussed earlier. Whatever the case may be, the experiences of Hamka as reflected in his interpretation of these verses are valid. Despite the Christian missionaries' claim that their goal was to civilize and save the people, missionary activity was an intrusion into Indonesian-Muslim internal affairs.

In a more theological tone, *Sūrat Āl 'Imrān* (3): 64 reads:

Say: "O People of the Book! come to common term as between us and you: that we worship none but Allah; that we associate no partner with Him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, Lords and patrons other than Allah."

Hamka argues that this verse invites Muslims, Jews, and Christians to come to a "common word" (*kalimat sawā'*) that can be a meeting point between them. What is common between them is the worship of God alone and non-association of partners with Him. Hamka believes the "common word" is contained in the original teachings of Moses and Jesus. Return to the "common word" will result in theological unity among the communities of the revealed religions, that is,

unity in diversity.³⁶ However, taking this verse as a basis for dialogue requires too much of the Jews and of Christians. By implication, it requires them to return to their original forms, but the question of the original message is itself a thorny issue. How can one know what is original and what is not?. Of course the Muslims would say that the original form is what is contained in Islam, because they believe that all the previous Prophets were Muslims (in the sense of submitting to the one and only God). The insistence on such a position by Muslims is seen as an imposition on the beliefs of others. Therefore, on the premise of this verse, theological dialogue is quite difficult. It is possible, however, to interpret this verse as Boland puts it: "their adherents... must be involved in the struggle for a just society, both nationally and internationally."³⁷ In other words, the "common word" is ethical and humanistic in nature, not dogmatic.

If the platform for inter-religious dialogue proposed by the Qur'ān, that the people of the book should not come to "common word" and differences should still prevail, Hamka adds, Muslims are still required to respect other faiths because there is "no coercion in religion." Having said that, it is interesting to see how Hamka interprets verse 256 of *Sūrat al-Baqarah* which asserts:

Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from error: whoever rejects Tagut and believes in Allah hath grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold, that never breaks...

This verse apparently grants people the liberty to choose their own religion. In the interpretation of this verse Hamka quotes a number of traditions reported in the classical *tafsīrs* in regard to the *asbāb al-nuzūl* of this verse.³⁸ During the pre-Islamic era in Madīnah, some people (who after the *hijrah* of the Prophet is known as *Anṣār* [helpers]), because of the superior life-style of the Jews in Madīnah, gave up their children so they could live with the Jews. These children grew up as Jews. But when the Jewish tribe of *al-Nadīr* was evicted from Madīnah, among them were the children of *Anṣār*. The *Anṣār* then asked the permission of the Prophet to convert them even with the use of force. Thus God sent this verse.³⁹ It is reported that the Prophet gathered them and asked them to choose whether to remain Jewish or to become Muslims.⁴⁰

This verse, according to Hamka, challenges human beings to use rational faculties to ponder the invitation of Islam. Coercion is not permitted in this verse because it interferes with the reasoning that human beings are supposed to exercise in knowing and learning about God and Islam. If coercion is allowed in Islam, Hamka emphasizes, it would result in the state of *taqlīd* (blind imitation).⁴¹ The above interpretation shows exactly what Hamka and his reformist friends struggled against and attempted to eradicate from Muslim society in Minangkabau and in Indonesia as a whole.

The message of this verse, in Hamka's view, propagates intellectual reform that he finds relevant to *taqlīd*-minded Indonesian Muslims. In a multi-religious society, religious freedom propagated by this verse must be upheld.

Furthermore, in *Sūrat Yūnus* (10): 100 we are told that "No soul can believe except by the will of Allāh," and warns that the job of *dā'ī* is to convey the message of Islam. God's grace and help will decide the faith of a person. If a person sincerely wishes to understand Islam, God's help will be with him or her. Or if a person is not serious about it, his or her doubts and difficulties will only be multiplied.⁴²

Hamka notes polemically and against the spirit of this verse that Muslims in the Muslim countries (especially Indonesia), through various programs and tactics, are compelled to leave Islam.⁴³ This is in contrast to how Muslim rulers treated their co-religionist-minorities. The minorities were allowed to practice their religions and were prosperous under Muslim rule.⁴⁴

Be that as it may, Hamka, argues that the Qur'ān in *Sūrat al-Mā'idah* (5): 83-85, recognizes the harmonious relationship between the Muslim and the neighboring Christian communities. However, *Sūrat al-Tawbah* (9):29 asserts:

Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, nor acknowledge the Religion of Truth, from among the

people of the Book, until they pay the *Jizyah* with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued.

Hamka contends that this verse makes no sense in light of good relationship between Muslim and Christian communities which was acknowledged by the Qur'ān. This verse has to be understood in the context of its occasion of revelation. It teaches Muslims how to deal with the people of the book in case they break the treatise and help the enemies of Islam to destroy Islam. Hamka reports that this verse applied to some of the Arab Christian tribes north of Medinah who betrayed the Prophet and sided with the Roman empire to fight the Muslims of Medinah. In addition, they disrupted the Muslim trade routes to Syria.⁴⁵ As a result of those incidents as well as the killing of the Prophet's messenger to the Arab Christian tribe of Baṣrah (in Iraq) by its king, al-Hārith bin 'Umayr al-Azdī, the Prophet went all out to fight the Christians. In Hamka's own words they were "*lebih Rūm dari Rūm sendiri*" (more Roman than the Roman themselves.)⁴⁶ They were more hostile than the strong Roman empire of that time. They acted adversely against their own Arab tribe to please Roman authorities.

The atrocities and hostilities against the Muslims of Medinah, according to Hamka, are in some ways similar to those against Indonesian Muslims during Dutch colonialism. The Dutch puppet officers committed atrocities against their fellow Indonesians to gain favors from their masters.⁴⁷ Therefore, it is cleared that the command to fight the

people of the book is not due to ideological differences, but to the threat they pose to the Muslims. In other words, the command is rooted in Muslim political interest rather than in ideological conflict.

Based on our discussion thus far, we find the connection between Hamka's ideas of interreligious relation and Muslims animosity against the Christians in Indonesia. This antagonism reflected in *MUI* position on the celebration of Christmas. Hamka, who was the chairman of *MUI* issued a *fatwā* (legal judgement) prohibiting the Indonesian Muslims to celebrate Christmas in order to protect Muslims from the mixing of Islamic truth (*al-ḥaqq*) with what the *fatwā* considered Christian falsehood (*al-bāṭil*).⁴⁸ However, the underlying reason is actually more far-reaching than it appears to be. It is undoubtedly rooted in the Muslim response to the process of Christianization in Indonesia. Under the pretext of interreligious harmony, encouraged by the Indonesian government, Christian missionaries appeared to have taken the opportunity to present Christianity to Muslims. In conclusion, religious antagonism between Muslims and Christians in Indonesia is ongoing action and reaction and offensive and defensive within the two communities. The *Fatwā* is one of the strategic Muslim responses to the process of Christianization in Indonesia.

Further analysis of this *Fatwā* reveals another important corner stone in interreligious relations in

Indonesia. The *Fatwā* does not prohibit the attendance of Christmas celebrations, but rather prohibits Muslims to attend ritual Christmas ceremonies. It clearly states that Muslims are allowed to work together and befriend the adherents of other religions on matters related to worldly affairs."⁴⁹ This pronouncement opens up a new horizon for inter-religious dialogue in Indonesia. The term "worldly affairs" is vague and may include anything that is not religious or lies outside the scope of faith. It may be implied that areas such as ethics or any other common human interests can ensure peaceful co-existence of all Indonesians. It is therefore, a new avenue for dialogue which lies beyond the scope of sensitive areas such as dogma and faith, that can be an effective foundation for inter-religious dialogue in Indonesia.

The Function of 'Aql (reason)

The concept of 'aql or reason is another issue that should enable us to identify the socio-political and intellectual climate of *Tafsīr al-Azhar*. Reason is an important element in Hamka's thought because, as discussed in an earlier chapter, Hamka was an Indonesian reformer who put a heavy emphasis on reason.⁵⁰ Before we go any further, it would not be out of place here to define what Hamka meant by reason. It is a gift from God by which human beings are differentiated from other creatures of God. Through reason

human beings are able to differentiate good from evil and to guide their lives in this world. Through the proper use of reason, human beings will realize their full potentialities. Reason also will allow human beings to contemplate and explore the secrets of the world created for them.⁵¹ Hamka writes:

'Aql is important to human beings for its ability to differentiate what is good from what is evil and bad. Human beings look at the world around them, through their senses, this produces a significant impact on their hearts.... With what they have seen, heard [and experience] they prepare themselves to face life. With that also they are able to recognize which things are beneficial and which are harmful, which are ugly and which are beautiful.⁵²

In understanding the meaning of Qur'ān, according to Hamka, reason plays an important role. In *Sūrat Fuṣṣilat* (41):53 we read:

Soon will We show them Our signs in the (furthest) regions [horizon] (of the earth), and in their own souls, until it becomes manifest to them that this is the Truth. Is it not enough that thy Lord doth witness all things?

Interpreting this verse, Hamka argues that reason is the means that can break the deadlock in comprehending some of the meanings and concepts of the Qur'ān. There are many obscure verses in the Qur'ān that could not be comprehended by Muslims in the past; with the help of science and technology developed by the human mind, those verses become comprehensible.⁵³ One of the examples quoted by Hamka is the scientific knowledge of the "atom" (*dharrah*). Muslims in the

past were not able to perceive atoms in the way the Muslims of today perceive it. It is clear therefore, that different minds will understand the verses of the Qur'ān in different ways and on different levels. The same blue sky and the same red rose will be understood differently depending on the level of thinking. All these knowledges and scientific discoveries, Hamka concludes, should point to one direction, that is, toward recognizing the oneness and absolute power of God.⁵⁴ Knowledge and reason do not exist for their own sake but rather for the purpose of knowing God.

Reason, as explained above, becomes one of the most important justifications for God's rewards and punishments in the hereafter. The employment of reason in the quest for God and Islam, according to Hamka, will result in a dynamic and strong faith in Islam. In contrast, coercion will produce *taqlīd* which will lead to rigidity and extremism, the antipathy of *kemerdekaan berfikir* (freedom of thought). God sanctions the inquisitive mind and condemns blind following. In *Sūrat al-Isrā'* (17): 36, Muslims are reminded to be learned followers and not to be involved in something of which one has no knowledge, reads:

And pursue not that of which thou hast no knowledge; For surely the hearing, the sight, the heart all those shall be questioned of.

Strong faith can only be with the person of strong intellect. In this connection, born-Muslims are also guilty of *taqlīd*. In interpreting *Sūrat al-Isrā'* (17): 36, Hamka

criticizes uncritical followers of Islam who just accepted whatever traditions and *adat-istiadat* (customs) were handed down by their ancestors. In contrast, Hamka argues, this verse demands of the Muslim to be critical of what he or she believes in, be it matters of religion or otherwise. In other words, the word *wa lā taqf* (and do not pursue) denotes the idea of critical thinking and *ijtihād*. Hamka was concerned about this issue not only because he was a reformer but also, more importantly, textually unfounded practices and *bid'ah* often go unchecked in Indonesian society.⁵⁵

The same argument is stated in *Sūrat al-Tawbah* (9):31 which declares:

They take their priests and their anchorites to be their lords beside Allah. And (they take as their Lord) Christ the son of Mary; Yet they were commanded to worship but One God: There is no god but He. Praise and glory to Him: (far is He) from having the partners they associate (with Him).

This verse cautions the Muslims not to repeat the false steps of the Jews and the Christians. The Jews and the Christians, Hamka argues, take their priests (*aḥbār*) and anchorites (*ruhbān*) to be their lords. This does not mean, that the Christians and Jews take the persons of their priests and anchorites as their lords but rather they take the words and decrees of their priests, which sometimes contradict the commandments of God, as sacred and holy. Because they see these words and decrees as holy (*luhur*) and

sacred (*kudus*), they believe they must be followed blindly.⁵⁶ This accusation, Hamka carefully qualifies, must not be applied to all Christian denominations. It may be applied to such denominations as Catholicism, in which church hierarchy represents power over the believers.⁵⁷

Hamka further argues that this verse may not address Muslims directly, but it is relevant to the Muslims in its meaning and application. After *ijtihād* is ceased the Muslims started to adopt *taqlīd* in their religion. The opinions of 'ulamā' were given emphasis over the Qur'ān and the tradition (*Sunnah*) of the Prophet. There are at least two obvious examples that demonstrate that *taqlīd* has become widespread: they are the areas of *fiqh* on one hand and mysticism on the other.⁵⁸

In the area of *fiqh*, the opinions and *ijtihāds* of a *madhhab* (legal school) are blindly followed, while texts and new findings in knowledge and science are neglected. This phenomenon, according to Hamka, has been the primary cause of rigidity and extremism in Islam.⁵⁹ In another place Hamka argues that this kind of narrow-mindedness in jurisprudence caused the emergence of *kaum muda* and *kaum tua* conflicts in Indonesia with which we have dealt in detail in earlier chapter (see Chapter Three).⁶⁰ Dealing with the rigid following of the *madhhab* in Indonesia taught Hamka to be non-confrontational and flexible in his approach. In his public engagements such as public speeches and Friday

sermons Hamka would research the dominant local practices, so whatever he did and said would not create division among the people. But this flexibility must be within the acceptable boundaries of the Qur'ān and prophetic tradition.⁶¹

Mysticism (which we will discuss in detail in a later section) became an area of concern for Hamka. In some *tariqahs* for example, the relationship between *murīd* (novice) and *shaykh* or *murshid* (spiritual master) must be that of the "dead body and the person who washes it." The *murīd* must completely submit to the will of his *shaykh*, the latter's instructions must be followed without questions whatsoever. The complete power of the *shaykh* over his disciple arises from the concept of *ḥulul* (God dwelling in the *shaykh*) and *ittiḥād* (union with God).⁶²

Ta' aṣṣub, or extremism to one particular *madhhab*, Hamka argues, has caused many conflicts, be it in Islamic history in general or the history of Muslims in Indonesia in particular. Shedding blood for the sake of belief has not only occurred between religions but also within Islam itself. In Minangkabau for example, people have witnessed the *padri* war which was an ideological war against *kaum adat* and finally against the Dutch. The Aceh war is another example of such a case.⁶³

The worshiping of the 'ulamā' in *fiqh* and the *shaykh* of *tariqah* is condemned by the Qur'ān and enclaves the Muslims

in a religious cocoon. This cocoon or religious *taqlīd* becomes a protective shell from the new constructive development of science and knowledge. The dynamism of Islam that once was highly admired by Muslims as well as non-Muslims is now dull, boring, rigid, uncreative and therefore unattractive to the modern mind. For that reason Hamka tried in all of his works to restore to Islam the dynamism and creativity that once enabled it to meet the challenges of the time.

There is no doubt that reason occupies a special role in Hamka's frame of thought. Religious understanding must consider reason as its frame of reference. Hamka stresses, "*beragama itu wajib dengan ilmu*" (religious belief must be based on knowledge). Hamka's commentary on the verses discussed in this section reveals one important fact: Muslim reform is an intellectual trend that became one of the dominant intellectual discourse in twentieth century Indonesia. Though some scholars attacked, the attacks did not decrease its vitality, but instead strengthened its foothold as one of the dominant discourses if not the most dominant discourse in Indonesia.

Hamka devoted much space for the discussion of reason in many of his writings. Yet reason was never absolutized by him. Revelation (*wahy*), according to Hamka, is the one force responsible for guiding reason. In pondering the universe, the human being's mind is able to see that there must be

God, but it does not know who God is or what His characteristics are. Revelation confirms human findings and further guides them to a point beyond that of reason. That is why without revelation humans perceive different kinds of gods such as blood-thirsty gods, or any other forms that the human mind is able to visualize.⁶⁴ In other words, revelation is the source of knowledge for human beings about matters that lie beyond the scope of reason. This knowledge may pertain to the concept of God and a belief system or/and rules and regulations (such as do and don't), or/and rewards and punishments.

This relationship between reason and revelation in human life is exhibited in *Sūrat al-Ra'd* (13): 11 which states:

...Verily never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves. But when (once) Allah willeth a people's punishment, there can be no turning it back, nor will they find, besides Him, any to protect.

This verse was taken by Hamka as irrefutable support for the role of reason in Muslim religious and intellectual life. The power of the intellect must be able to guide the human being to a destination that he or she wants, but not without the help and grace of Allah. This is because God will help and shower His grace upon a person who helps himself or herself.⁶⁵

By implication, this verse forbids Muslims to take a pessimistic view of life, and encourages optimism and

pro-active participation, that is, to be history-makers. It is because of this intellectual capacity that God chose man and woman to be His *khalīfah* (vicegerent) on earth.⁶⁶

However, pure intellectual faculty, Hamka adds, is not able to realize its full potential; help from God is needed. This is because the intellect is always subject to time and space, putting a limit on the realm of intellectual understanding. That is why this verse must not be taken partially; the part that stresses reason must be read in its broader context. This is because the verse also gives equal emphasis to the supreme power of God.⁶⁷ All in all, the concept of *tawakkal*⁶⁸ (reliance on God) may be an appropriate illustration of this idea. It is an optimistic outlook that gives both intellect and revelation their dues. For human beings to be successful in this life and the next, they must not neglect one or the other, the two must be together.

Hamka and Mysticism

Mysticism is an area of paramount importance in the study of Islam and Islamic thought in Indonesia. It has been the subject of debate for a long time. Mysticism has been identified with the spread of Islam in the Malay-Indonesian world as well as its stagnation. In this regard it is interesting to see how Hamka perceives mysticism and subjects related to it as reflected in his *Tafsīr al-Azhar*.

Hamka's interest in mysticism is well evidenced in his many works on this subject: *Tasauf Moderen* (Modern Mysticism), and *Akhlāqul Karīmah* (the Noble Morals) *Renungan Tasauf* (Mystical Contemplation), *Tasauf: Perkembangan dan Pemurniannya* (Mysticism: Its Development and its Purification). In *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, he gathers together all mystical ideas legitimated by the texts of the Qur'ān and the traditions of the Prophet.

Hamka perceives mysticism as a way of knowing God. It is a process of inward looking at the self by means of contemplation and self-purification (*tazkiah al-nafs*) and self-discipline (*riyāḍah al-nafs*). The main purpose of this exercise is to have control over animalistic desires until the veil between the human servant and God is removed to facilitate direct knowledge of God. This intense search for God is summarized in the popular Sufi aphorism "He who knows himself, truly knows his Lord."⁶⁹

Human beings consist of two components, the physical and spiritual. The spiritual is the self or soul, the essence of human being. The Qur'ān generally refers to this as *al-qalb* (heart),⁷⁰ *al-'aql* (intellect, *al-rūḥ* (spirit),⁷¹ or *al-nafs* (self)⁷² which reside in the physical body. This self is part of the divine Self or Spirit⁷³ endowed with extraordinary power to know God.⁷⁴ By virtue of this incredible potential of the self, Hamka asserts that the human being reflects deeply himself or herself in order to

unveil the mystery and arrive at knowledge of God (*ma' rifat Allāh*).⁷⁵

Besides the way of mysticism, according to Hamka, there are two other ways to know God. The first is the way of the artist, an intense feeling of beauty of the universe, allows an artist to realize God.⁷⁶ This realization will take place when the human's inward beauty meets the outward beauty of the universe. The state of *rasa* (feeling) connects the two natures of beauty manifested in human senses of *penglihatan* (sight) and *pendengaran* (hearing).⁷⁷ Hamka writes:

When the human comes into existence, she or he extends the cord between the universe and his or her heart. This cord is his or her feeling. It may be simple at the outset, but become sharp when it is polished and refined by means of seeing beauty (of the universe outside him or her).⁷⁸

These ideas are reflected in Hamka's commentary on *Sūrat al-Baqarah* (2): 164 and *Sūrat Āl ' Imrān* (3): 191.⁷⁹ The wonder of the creation of the universe should lead human beings to know God the creator. Hamka uses 2:164 and 3:191 to provide evidence of the existence of God. The heavens and the earth, the alteration of day and night, the sailing of the ships in the ocean, rain from the sky, the winds, and the clouds are the signs of God. Humankind are required to ponder and use his or her intelligence to probe into these creations of God. This intense search according to Hamka will result in the knowledge of God.⁸⁰

This feeling of wonder will fluctuate in the course of a human life. It becomes the predominant aspect in one's relationship with the universe. To maintain strong ties with the universe Hamka proposes pondering the beauty of the universe when the waves of the sea dash upon the rock, when the sun rises and sets, when the moon and the stars decorate the sky at night.⁸¹ According to Hamka, the human being must always refine his feeling of beauty for it is the instrument for appreciating the outward beauty of the universe. This kind of human being will appreciate the creation of the universe: "Our lord! not for naught hast thou created (all) this! glory be to Thee..."⁸²

Second, Philosophy, Hamka argues, can also bring one to the realization of ultimate Being. The pinpoint regularities and order of the universe will make philosophers wonder about the Creator. Such an extraordinary creation governed by well-structured law and perfect order could not exist by accident.⁸³ It is an undeniable fact, Hamka is convinced, that can be proven scientifically. To deny this fact is to deny the existence of science itself, for science is a quest for the discovery of law and order. The end of science is the beginning of philosophy, denying science is therefore denying philosophy.⁸⁴

Looking into the way of the artist and the way of philosophy as means of realization of God, one wonders about their validity and applicability in the background of human

experiences. The above exposition might work well for scholars like Hamka and those who have similar religious backgrounds. Hamka, being from a religious family, attended religious school, and his thought and behavior were thus colored by his religiosity. Arts, philosophy, and literature are therefore only means of expression which were obviously constructed by his Islamicity. The way of the artist and philosopher are not by general rule applicable to all people regardless of their socio-political, educational, and religious backgrounds. Different people may reach different conclusions from the same information. Hamka's expositions have taken many aspects of human experience for granted. The diversity of human experience might not come to same conclusions as Hamka wishes. However, to be fair to Hamka, we should not read into his expositions too much. He may well just be talking about his own experience which is valid and meaningful for him. In this regard Hamka qualifies that:

If we want to arrive at the reality of the universe we cannot merely use reason. We have two other treasures, besides reason, i.e., feeling (*shu'ūr*) and will (*irādah*). Even so, it is difficult to ensure the religiosity of "religious man or woman" if she or he uses mere reason... one who arrives at knowledge of the truth by means of logic (reason) is named '*ālim*. But one who arrives at the highest level of feeling is called '*ārif*. For the next step to '*ilm* is *ma'rifah*.⁸⁵

Reason operates under the law of causation, cause and effect, subject and object world. The limit of reason, however, is extended further by the intuitive knowledge

(*ma'rifah*) of the Sufis.⁸⁶ It is clear therefore, that the intuitive knowledge of the Sufis belongs to a higher class of knowledge which can only be achieved through self-discipline and self-purification. Hamka supports the idea of intuitive knowledge, but the means to arrive at it must be right. That is, in the process of seeking, the seeker must not isolate himself or herself from the real physical world or the society at large. Hamka explains in his own words:

The position of spirituality [in human life] must not weaken the spirit of struggle for life, the seeker must not isolate himself or herself from societal life by escaping to the mountain, and feeling of hopelessness But the real spiritual function is the sincere recognition of the power of God that implicate the seriousness in all works. It should also result in the dynamism of life which ultimately will bring about sincerity and honesty.⁸⁷

This statement indicates the position of Hamka in regard to the mystical life. This is a sober type of mysticism which does not isolate societal life from mystical life.

Mystical order (*ṭarīqah*) takes an important place in Hamka's discourse on mysticism. Historically, the place of Sufi orders was well-established after the eleventh century.⁸⁸ One of the chief features of *ṭarīqah* that has not changed is the relationship established between *shaykh* (the spiritual master) and *murīd* (novice/disciple). The system of *ṭarīqah* has always insisted that in a spiritual journey, the attachment of a novice to a master is inevitable. The master

will guide his novice through different stages of the spiritual journey until the novice achieves his goal. The experience of the master is valuable in identifying what is real, what is the way of God and what is false, and what is the way of the devil as the temptations of the devil are many and potent. In elucidating this relationship Imam al-Ghazālī explains:

the disciple must cling to his *shaykh* as a blind man on the edge of a river clings to his leader...the advantage he gains from the error of his *shaykh*...is greater than the advantage he gains from his own rightness.⁸⁹

This spiritual intimacy between novice and master in some practices of certain *ṭarīqahs* have further developed into the well-known practices of *rābiṭah* and *tawassul*. The term *rābiṭah* in Sufism refers to the novice's visualization of the image of his *shaykh* in his utmost perfection, not only to attain total submission to his *shaykh* but also as a kind of identification with him. The novice loses himself completely in the image of his *shaykh* and thus reaches the level of "annihilation in the *shaykh*" (*fanā' fī al-shaykh*) in order to attain "annihilation in God". (*fanā' fī Allāh*).⁹⁰ This is the concept that Hamka sternly criticizes. Hamka believes in total submission to God alone without intermediaries.

The *shaykh* is human and being human is subject to the laws of God contained in the Qur'ān and the traditions of the Prophet. To support his argument Hamka quotes *Sūrat al-*

Fātihah (1):5 reads "Thee do we worship, and Thine aid we seek" and a tradition of the Prophet who is reported to have said, "Every one of the Children of Adam is guilty and the best of those who are guilty are those who repent."⁹¹ Based on these texts, Hamka argues, a human being could not have such an absolute authority over the others as absolute authority only belongs to God alone.⁹² On another occasion, while discussing the relationship between Sufism and *tawḥīd*, Hamka comments that true Sufism is that which stems from *tawḥīd* and which recognizes total submission to God alone. *Rābiṭah*, on the contrary, entails complete submission to the spiritual master.

When the novice completely submits to his *shaykh*, the master in turn carries him into the spiritual journey seeking God. The master is therefore a medium between novice and God. This concept of intercession is known in Sufism as *waṣīlah*. The novice will ask for blessing from his master before performing *dhikr* (remembering God). The novice will say, "Oh God! I pray to You with the blessing of the Messenger of God and my Master, give me Your knowledge and love."⁹³ In elaboration Hamka explains the interceding prayer will follow the hierarchy of the saints. A prayer is conveyed to the *shaykh* who conveys to the *watad* (pl. *awṭād*)⁹⁴ who then delivers to *quṭb* (the spiritual pole)⁹⁵ who brings the prayer to *ghawth* who will convey to God.⁹⁶

This mystical practice is allegedly based on verses of the Qur'ān and a tradition of the Prophet: they are *Sūrat al-Mā'idah* (5): 35 reads:

O ye who believe! do your duty to Allah, seek the means of approaching onto Him, and strive (with might and main) in His cause: that you may prosper.

In *Sūrat al-Isrā'* (17): 57 reads:

Those whom they call upon do seek (for themselves) means of access to their Lord as to who are nearest. They hope for His mercy and fear His wrath of thy Lord is something to take heed of.

And a tradition reported by 'Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb who said:

O Allah! We used to ask our Prophet to invoke You for rain, and You would bless us with rain, and now we ask his uncle to invoke You for rain. Oh Allah! bless us with rain.⁹⁷

The term *wasīlah* in these verses, according to Hamka, means the "roads" or "ways" to God. It is the straight and the quickest path to God. This goal can be achieved by drawing nearer to God of performing more services to God, righteous deeds (*'amal al-ṣāliḥ*), upholding noble character, establishing compassionate relationships with other humans, making supplication (*do'ā*), and avoiding evil.⁹⁸ *Wasīlah* therefore is nothing more than an individual's own efforts to acquire intimacy with God. It is not related at all to the blessing of the *shaykh* who acts as medium between man and God.⁹⁹

The concept of *wasīlah* in the above tradition can not be the basis for mystical practices. But it should be understood, Hamka comments, as common practice to request

one of the learned audience to come forward and read the prayer and have the audience will say *āmīn*. Furthermore it is allowable to ask a person who is alive to make *du'a* on behalf of another person.¹⁰⁰ Hamka, on the other hand strongly opposed asking favors from the dead, for from the grave, the dead person is by no means able to help. With this beginning, *wasīlah* later developed into grave and spirit worship. Hamka seems to agree with Ibn Taymiyyah that this kind of practice in Sufism is not *wasīlah*, but *shirk* (associating others with God).¹⁰¹

These are the two concepts that have been criticized over the years by Muslim modernists. Hamka is no exception. His views echoed the position taken by the previous modernist Muslim leaders in Minangkabau who were pioneered by Ahmad Khāṭib. All these views found their ways back to Ibn Taymiyyah's *al-Qā'idah al-Jalīlah fī al-Tawāsul wa al-Wasīlah* (The Clear Method of Intercession and Intercessor). This book strongly criticizes the practice of *wasīlah* which has become synonymous with grave worship.¹⁰² Looking at Hamka's arguments, one wonders about their compatibility as the Sufis expressed their mystical experience, and Hamka on the other hand, argued on the grounds of *Sharī'ah*. However, this does not surprise us as Hamka was a modernist Muslim leader who propagated a positive outlook on life. Also, he observed the dull and unproductive Islamic social life in Indonesia. In the matter of religion, superstition and

unwarranted innovation were widespread. Any *salafi*-minded scholar would not tolerate such practices, and Hamka was one of them. After all, Islamic reform and Islamic esotericism coexisted in the person of the reform mentor, Muhammad 'Abduh.¹⁰³

These criticisms against the practices of *ṭarīqah*, however, do not in any way imply total rejection of *ṭarīqah* organization as such. Hamka's overall view of *ṭarīqah* is a positive one, except for the practices that were obviously contradictory to the original intention of *ṭarīqah*. Hamka admits that the spiritual path is difficult and only those who have experienced it will be able to identify the stages, pitfalls, and goals in a mystical journey. In addition, Sufism is a science of taste (*dhawq*), and any guidance from a knowledgeable and experienced *shaykh* is of tremendous help.¹⁰⁴ In general Hamka rejects some corrupted practices of *ṭarīqah* but not the system of *ṭarīqah*.

Zuhd (asceticism) is another essential issue Hamka deals with in an elaborative fashion. The term *zuhd* is commonly interpreted as detachment from worldly life and its pleasures and attachment to the next life. The person who practices *zuhd* is called *zāhid* (ascetic). Hamka views the practice of *zuhd* as similar to that of mysticism, a positive approach to self-purification. One purifies the heart from being attached to the world by forgetting societal roles and duties in this worldly life. Hamka explains through *Sūrat*

al-Qaṣaṣ (28): 77¹⁰⁵ that worldly property should be spent for the sake of God so as to prepare oneself for life in the next world. Wealth, Hamka reiterates, is a bounty from God that must be spent for His sake. Acquiring wealth is also of paramount importance in Islam. It must be obtained through *halal* (permissible) means prescribed by Islamic law.¹⁰⁶ Ascetic life and seclusion have no place in Hamka's frame of reference. Neither do those who are obsessed with worldly possession; they are the "speculators." The best path, for Hamka, is a balance between these two extremes; to be rich but generous and humble, and to be a mystic but actively involved in society.¹⁰⁷

Hamka's views in this regard are typical of those of modernist Muslims who reject ascetic practices in Sufism and propagate pietistic Sufism. Therefore, Hamka's view is only a replica of the Muslim reform view pioneered by Ibn Taymiyyah. Hamka shares this pioneering work in Indonesian context perhaps by disseminating reform ideas to the Indonesian masses through his popular-writings. By the middle of the twentieth century, reform ideas were rooted among the intellectuals, but for them to be effective, grass root support was needed. And this was Hamka's role: to help spread the ideas to the Indonesian populace.

Concluding Remarks

Tafsīr al-Azhar, Hamka's masterpiece, is a tool for the purification of Islam in Indonesia. This work can be included in the general genre of those modern *tafsīrs* that try to address local social and religious problems. However, Hamka's *tafsīr* is unique in the context of the Malay-Indonesian world in that local issues are used to explain some of the verses of the Qur'ān. Therefore, it reflects both the local social setting and socio-political and intellectual currents of his time in which at least two concurrent and perhaps interrelated trends were at their zenith: the reform movement and the struggle for independence from colonial rule.

From the discussion above it is clear that Hamka is a product of his time. He did not hesitate to denounce some interpretations and to justify his own. Qur'ānic commentary is colored by the commentator. The verses of the Qur'ān are the textual bases for the legitimacy of his points of view. But that does not mean, by doing so, Hamka was wrong. After all, the revelation of the Qur'ān is meant to guide human beings by giving them some general rules. It is up to the human being to make use of them but only within that scope and limitation.

Reform-minded, Hamka orchestrated his thought to reform Muslims and the Islamic outlook in Indonesia. *Taqlīd* is one of the most serious impediments to progress and development; Hamka advocated the use of intellectual reasoning in some

religious matters and by implication questions the applicability of classical interpretations of religion.

Mysticism in Indonesia absorbed some local negative practices especially the Javanese *kebatinan* that led to the attitude of renouncing worldly life and pessimistic views of life in general. This atmosphere leads Hamka to reform Sufism in Indonesia that can be seen in one of the very titles of his Sufi works, *Mysticism: its Development and Purification*. His work, *Tasauif Moderen*, which was written at the request of a Chinese convert, has changed many people's perceptions about Sufism and life in general. This reform work extends to other areas in religion, as we will observe in the next Chapter.

ENDNOTES

1. Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, vol. 1, p. 48.
2. Hamka reported that while he was writing *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, he was very lonely but at peace with what he was facing. During his detention, he was placed in seclusion in various prisons: Sukabumi, Bungalow Herlina, and Harjuna, located on the top of the mountain Mega Mendung. However, due to health problems, he was transferred to a hospital in Jakarta, Persahabatan Rawamangun. Even in the hospital he was still writing. See Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, vol. 1, p. 42.
3. It is important for this writing to realize that Hamka originally failed to consider the primary importance of the instructive nature of *Sūrat al-Baqarah* (2) as a prerequisite to determine the entire future of his life. His private reasoning surely could be consider valid in regard to his individual experiences of initiating his writing with *Sūrat al-Mu'minūn* (23).
4. Accustomed to the inspiring traditional Islamic culture Indonesian youth realized the importance of being fully knowledgeable of the Qur'anic resources, especially when made available for them in the native language.
5. Ibid., p. 4.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., pp. 699-700, see also Hamka, "Mensyukuri Tafsīr 'al-Azhar'," *Panji Masyarakat*, no 317, p. 43.
8. See Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, vol. 1, unpagged general bibliography at the end of the volume. See also Hamka, "Mensyukuri Tafsīr 'al-Azhar'," p. 43.
9. "Textbook thinking" according to Hamka is a narrow understanding of an idea or a concept which can lead to rigidity and fanaticism. This attitude will consider a new idea with suspicion and encroaching upon already established ideas. In other words, it is a mentality that fear new discovery and reform. We can assume that Hamka referred to the traditionalists in Indonesia who were very much against

the reform movement's new approach to understanding Islam. See Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, vol. 1, p. 182.

10. Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, vol. 1, p. 40.

11. Ibid., p. 41.

12. Ibid.

13. The thematic Qur'anic commentary is formulated by forming a theme(s) from verses of the Qur'ān that are taken from different *Sūrahs*. These verses are supposed to address the same issue or indirectly have some bearing on meanings. By doing so, congruous and lucid commentaries of the Qur'ān can be established.

14. See Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, vol. 10, pp. 7558-93.

15. See, for example, Introduction of *Sūrat Yūnus*, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, vol. 5, pp. 3192-95.

16. See Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, vol. 10, pp. 7358-7393.

17. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 29.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 29. See also vol. 6, pp. 4718-19.

20. Ibid. vol. 1, pp. 29-33.

21. Ibid., p. 42.

22. Ibid., vol. 9, pp. 7300-4.

23. Ibid., p. 7303.

24. See Majelis Ulama Indonesia, *Kumpulan Fatwa Majelis Ulama Indonesia* (The Collection of Legal Judgements of the 'Ulamā' Council of Indonesia) (Jakarta: Pustaka Panjimas, 1984), pp. 81-89.

25. Pak Kasimo was a member of GAPI (*Gabungan Politik Indonesia* [Federation of Indonesian Political Parties]) founded in 1930. Religiously he was a respectful figure among the Catholics as well as Muslims. This was due to his role in Indonesian physical revolution and struggle against Dutch domination.

26. Rusydi, *Pribadi*, Appendix iii, p. 293.

27. *Panji Masyarakat*, no. 19 (October 1967): p. 25.

28. Ibid.

29. Rusydi, *Pribadi*, p. 175. See also Hamka, *Ghirah dan Tentangan Terhadap Islam* (Self-Dignity and Challenges to Islam) (Jakarta: Pustaka Panjimas, 1982), pp. 15, 17.

30. Rusydi, *Pribadi*, p. 175.

31. Ibid., p. 175. See also B.J. Boland, *The Struggle of Islam in Indonesia* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1982), p. 231.

32. Boland, *The Struggle of Islam*, p. 231.

33. Ibid., pp. 226, 228.

34. One of such activity is reported that a joint conference of Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches held in 1962 in East Java. In this conference a plan was drawn to Christianize Java in 20 years and all Indonesia in a period of 50 years. The programs were said to be building schools, encouraging inter-religious marriage, and others. See Boland, *The Struggle of Islam*, p. 227.

35. Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, vol. i, p. 287

36. Ibid., vol. 2, p. 798.

37. Boland, *The Struggle of Indonesia*, p. 242.

38. For various traditions on the *asbāb al-nuzūl* see Maḥmūd Ayoub, *The Qur'an and Its Interpreters*, vol. 1 (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1984), pp. 252-255.

39. Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, vol. 1, pp. 623-24.

40. Ibid., p. 624.

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid., vol. 5, p. 3401. See also Yusof 'Alī, *The Holy Qur'ān*, p. 577, note 1481. Using the same tone of argument, Hamka interprets *Sūrat al-An'ām* (6): 112. See Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, vol. 3, p. 2150.

43. Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, vol. 1, p. 627.

44. Ibid., vol. 2, p. 799.

45. Ibid., vol. 4, pp. 2913-14.

46. Ibid.
47. Ibid., p. 2915
48. For the original text of the *fatwā* see Majelis Ulama Indonesia, *Kumpulan Fatwa*, pp. 81-89. See also Mudzhar, Mohamad Atho, "Fatwā's of the Council of Indonesian Ulama: A study of Islamic Legal Thought in Indonesia, 1975-1988," (Ph.D. diss., University of California Los Angeles, 1990), p. 112.
49. Majelis Ulama Indonesia, *Kumpulan Fatwa*, p. 81.
50. See Hamka, *Pelajaran Agama Islam*, pp. 182, 184-5. See also Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, vol. 10, p. 7431; vol. 5, p. 3401.
51. Hamka, *Pelajaran Agama Islam*, p. 182.
52. Ibid..
53. Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, vol. 8, p. 6491.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid., vol. 6, p. 4058. See also Hamka, *Pelajaran Agama Islam*, pp. 9-10.
56. Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, vol. 4, pp. 2926-27.
57. Ibid., p. 2928.
58. Ibid., pp. 2931-32.
59. Ibid., p. 2932.
60. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 612.
61. To prove his point Hamka cites one obsolete *fatwā* the *muftī* of Singapore, issued in 1960 that: "it is prohibited for human beings to go to the moon." Commenting on the *fatwā* Hamka says: "*Tuan muftī telah ketinggalan keretapi*" (the *mufti* has missed the train) because nine years after that an American astronaut successfully landed on the moon. See Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, vol. 4, p. 2936.
62. Ibid., p. 2932-33. A detailed discussion will be done in the succeeding section of this chapter.
63. Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, vol. 1, p. 613.
64. Ibid., p. 69.

65. Ibid., vol. 5, p. 3741.
66. Ibid.
67. Ibid. See also Hamka's interpretation of *Sūrat al-Insān* (76): 29-30, vol. 10, p. 7808.
68. For a detailed exposition of *tawakkal*, see Hamka, *Tasauf Moderen*, pp. 242-255.
69. Hamka, *Pelajaran Agama Islam*, p. 17.
70. See for example *Sūrat Āl 'Imrān* (3): 103, 126, 151, 154; *Sūrat al-Taubah* (9): 117; *Sūrat al-A' rāf*(7): 101.
71. See for example *Sūrat al-Isrā'* (17): 85 and *Sūrat al-Shu' arā'* (26): 193.
72. See *Sūrat al-Mā'idah* (5): 45; *Sūrat al-Anbiyā'* (21): 35; *Sūrat al-Munāfiqūn* (63): 11.
73. In the Qur'ān *Sūrat al-Sajdah* (32):9 God says:

...He fashioned him in the due proportion, and
 breathed into him of His spirit. And He gave you
 (the faculties of) hearing and sight and
 understanding little thanks do you give!
74. Hamka, *Pandangan Hidup*, p. 18.
75. Ibid. This mystical state is known by different terms. Rabi'ah al-'Adawiyah (d. 801) called it *al-mahabbah* (love). Dhu al-Nūn al-Misri (d. 859) termed it as *al-ma'rifah* (gnosis). Bayazid al-Bistāmī (d. 874) called it *al-ittiḥād* (union with the Beloved). See Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975), pp. 38-9, 43-7, 144-5.
76. Hamka, *Pandangan Hidup*, p. 18.
77. Ibid., p. 132.
78. Ibid., p. 79. This translation is adopted with some modifications from Nur Hadi Ihsan "Hamka (1908-1981): A Study of Some Aspects of His Sufi Thought" (Masters thesis, International Islamic University, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 1996), p. 41.
79. The verse in *al-Baqarah*: 164 reads:

Behold! in the creation of the heavens and the earth: in the alternation of the night and the day; in the sailing of the ships through the ocean for the profit of mankind; in the rain which Allah sends down from the skies, and the life which He gives therewith to an earth that is dead; in the beasts of all kinds that scatters through the earth; in the change of the winds, and the clouds which they trail like their slaves between the sky and the earth; (here) indeed are signs for a people that are wise.

The verse in *Āl 'Imrān*: 191 reads:

Men who remember Allah standing, sitting, and lying down on their sides, and contemplate the (wonders of) creation in the heavens and the earth, (with the saying): "Our Lord not for naught hast Thou created (all) this! glory to thee! give us salvation from the chastisement of the fire.

80. Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, vol. 1, pp. 365-7; vol. 2, pp. 1033-35.

81. Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, vol. 1, pp. 363-64; vol. 2, p. 1032; *Pelajaran Agama Islam*, p. 11.

82. Ibid., p. 83. For the verse, see *Sūrat Āl 'Imrām* (3): 191.

83. Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, vol. 1, p. 365-366; *Pandangan Hidup Muslim*, p. 13.

84. Hamka, *Pandangan Hidup Muslim*, p. 13.

85. Ihsan, "Hamka: A study of His Sufi Thought," p. 49.

86. Hamka, *Pelajaran Agama Islam*, p. 18.

87. Ibid., p. 19.

88. For the definition of the term *ṭarīqah* and its development of meaning see, Louis Massignon, "Tarika," in *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, 1974 ed. See also A.H. Johns, "Tariqah," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, 1987 ed.

89. H.A.R. Gibb, *Islam: A Historical Survey*, 2d, ed. (Oxford: University Press, 1980), p. 102.

90. See Muhammad Darniqah, *al-ṭarīqah al-Naqshabandiyah wa A' lāmuhā* (Beirut: Gross Press, n.d.), p. 28. See also John G.J. ter Haar, "The Importance of the Spiritual Guide in the

Naqshabandiyah Order," in *The Legacy of Medieval Persian Sufism*, ed. Leonard Lewison (London, New York: Khaniqah Nimatullahi Publication, 1992), p. 320.

91. Abū al-'Alī Muḥammad 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Abd al-Raḥīm Alambarkapuri, *Tuḥfah al-Aḥwādyi bi Sharḥ Jāmi' al-Tirmīdhī*, revised and edited by 'Abd al-Raḥmān Muḥammad 'Uthmān (Madīnah: Al-Maktabah al-Salafiyah, 1963), p. 202.

92. Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, vol. 1, pp. 79, 428. See also Hamka, *Pelajaran Agama*, p. 71-72.

93. Shekh Haji Jalaluddin, *Pertahanan Tarekat Naqshabandiyah* (n.c: n.p., n.d.), p. 63 as quoted in Ihsan, "Hamka: Some Aspects of Sufi Thought," p. 62.

94. Awtād (sing. watad) is the saints whose rant is little inferior to that of the Qutb. Speaking of Awtād al-Ḥujwīrī says:

It is their office to go around the whole world every night, and if there be any place on which their eyes have not fallen, next day some flaw will appear in that place; and they must then inform the Qutb, in order that he may direct his attention to the weak spot, and that by his blessing the imperfection may be remedied. (see AL-Hujwiri, *The Kashf al-Maḥjūb*, tr. Reynold A. Nicholson [New Delhi: Taj Company, 1991], p. 228.)

95. It is an axis or pole on which the spheres of existence revolve from first to last, and since thing came into being he is one for ever and ever. He has various guises and appears in diverse bodily tabernacles. al-Jili calls the perfect man the Qutb who is the preserver of the universe. See R. A. Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), pp. 79, 86-7, 105, 110-11, 195-96.

96. Hamka, *Pandangan Hidup Muslim*, p. 56.

97. See Imam al-Bukhari, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, tr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan (Lahore: Kazi Publications, 1979), vol. 2, p. 66, hadith no. 123 in the chapter of *Istisqā'* (the book of Invoking Allah for Rain). See also Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, vol. 3, p. 1725; Hamka, *Pelajaran Agama*, p. 74.

98. Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, vol. 3, p. 1723. See also vol. 6, p. 4076; Hamka, *Pelajaran Agama*, p. 74. cf. Hamka, *Renungan Tasauf* (Jakarta: Pustaka Panjimas, 1985), p. 21.

99. Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, vol. 3, p. 1723.

100. Ibid., p. 1726.
101. Ibid.
102. Ibid. p. 1727.
103. For compatibility and incompatibility between Islamic reform and mysticism see Julian Johansen, *Sufism and Islamic Reform in Egypt* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).
104. See Hamka, *Tasauf: Perkembangan dan Pemurniannya*, p. 100. See also Hamka, *Akhlaqul Karimah* (Jakarta: Pustaka Panjimas, 1992), p. 18.
105. The verse (28): 77 reads:
- But seek, with the (wealth) which Allah has bestowed on thee, the Home of the Hereafter, nor forget thy portion in this world: but do thou good, as Allah has been good to thee, and seek not (occasions for) mischief in the land: For Allah loves not those who do mischief.
106. Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, vol. 7, p. 5376.
107. Hamka, *Pandangan Hidup Muslim*, p. 151.

CHAPTER 6

TAFSĪR AL-AZHAR AS A REFLECTION OF SOCIAL CHANGE
IN TWENTIETH CENTURY INDONESIA

Introductory Remarks

This chapter is an attempt to examine *Tafsīr al-Azhar* as a reflection of social change in twentieth century Indonesia. In this endeavor some significant issues of that time will be identified so as to establish the relationship between these issues and Hamka's textual legitimation in *Tafsīr al-Azhar*. The social, political, and religious currents of the twentieth century may have had direct bearing on Hamka's Qur'anic commentary. His commentary on some relevant verses should indicate some points of his concern about the above phenomena. Therefore *Tafsīr al-Azhar* is not only a commentary but, perhaps more importantly, a textual legitimation of Hamka's thought.

The issues to be investigated in this chapter are: social justice, human religious unity, and religious educational reform. These issues are Hamka's points of concern which fill the pages of his *tafsīr*. Hamka's interpretation of relevant verses will tell us about the social phenomena of the time.

Social Justice in Indonesia

It is explicitly clear that throughout his works Hamka was concerned with social justice and social disparities in Indonesian society. Such ideas are more apparent in his *Islam: Revolusi Ideologi dan Keadilan Sosial* (Islam: Ideological Revolution and Social Justice), a collection of three books: *Revolusi Agama* (Religious Revolution), *Falsafah Ideologi Islam* (Philosophy of Islamic Ideology), and *Keadilan Sosial* (Social Justice). The first book was written during the years of "revolusi fisik" (Physical revolution), the struggle against the Dutch colonial power. This book was meant to motivate the Indonesian people, especially the traditional Muslims, to take part in the struggle for independence.

After the Dutch authorities recognized the independence of Indonesia in 1949, Hamka wrote the second and third books (*Falsafah Ideologi Islam* and *Keadilan Sosial*, first published in 1950 by Wijaya in Jakarta) which aimed to provide a sense of purpose and direction for Indonesia. This direction, according to Hamka, must be determined by two primary factors. The first is Islam as a national ideology. The second is social justice for all Indonesians.¹ *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, written late in Hamka's life, not only expanded further the two themes expressed in the above book, but also provided textual legitimacy for them.

In Hamka's view, social justice in Indonesia can be discussed on two levels, the individual and societal. Islam perceives individuals to have been created by God as His *khalīfah* (vicegerent)² on earth to ensure that His commandments are put into practice. The Qur'ān provides a philosophical foundation for social justice in Islam. *Sūrat al-Ḥujurāt* (49): 13, reads: "...Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you..." Based on this verse all humankind are given the opportunity to begin life on equal footing. Ethnic origin does not make a person superior over others. The sole measurement for superiority is good deeds, which are individually acquired. In Hamka's words:

the real honor that is considered worthwhile in the sight of Allah are *kemulian hati* (a warm heart), *kemulian budi* (respectable character), and obedience to Allah.³

In contrast to the spirit of this verse, Hamka comments on an Indonesian phenomenon in which the *sayyid*⁴ ethnicity is considered superior over non-*sayyid*. As a result, inter-marriage between *sayyids* and non-*sayyids* is customarily prohibited.

The Qur'ān also lays out some ethical codes of conduct for individual Muslims to guarantee the smooth running of societal life. *Sūrat al-Ḥujurāt* (49): 11, reads:

O ye who believe! let not some men among you laugh at others: It may be that the (latter) are better than the (former): Nor let some women laugh at others: it may be that the (latter) are better than the (former): Nor defame nor be sarcastic to

each other, nor call each other by (offensive) nicknames: Ill-seeming is a name connoting wickedness, (to be used of one) after he has believed: And those who do not desist are (indeed) doing wrong.

49: 12 reads:

O ye who believe! avoid suspicion as much (as possible): for suspicion in some cases is a sin: and spy not on each other, nor speak ill of each other behind their backs. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Nay, ye would abhor it. But fear Allah: for Allah is oft-returning, most Merciful.

In these verses the Qur'ān reminds the Muslims of social evils that will destroy social solidarity among the members of society. In Hamka's view these verses provide a code of ethics to protect individual freedoms and social stability. The Qur'ān cautions Muslims to beware of dangerous social diseases to be avoided at all costs. In 49: 11 Muslims are warned against laughing at one another, defaming others, sarcasm, and calling others with offensive nicknames. Instead one should be *tawāḍu'* (humble) and conscious of one's own weaknesses; the person who is offended may be better than the one who is offending.⁵ The strong advice in this verse is followed by another stern warning. *Sūrat al-Humazah* (104): 1, reads: "Woe to every (kind of) scandal-monger and backbiter."

In 49: 12 Muslims continue to be warned against behavior which may interrupt social harmony. A true believer, according to Hamka, should avoid suspicion, spying and backbiting. The Qur'ān equates such acts with eating the

flesh of one's own brother, an unthinkable act for a civilized human being.⁶ Hamka relates this verse to political campaigns in Indonesia in which character assassination creating suspicions about one's opponent were the political order of the day.⁷ Hamka could not help but retell his own experience of imprisonment on a false charge during the Sukarno regime. Hamka's faith in these verses and his experience as a political prisoner caused him to lose faith in the Sukarno regime.⁸ Hamka's description of the Sukarno regime's suspicion and unfounded accusation of the people in relation to this verse is as follows:

When people get together in a group of more than three it is reported as a secret planning (*rapat gelap*) for rebellion. Day by day such reports are increasing. This causes government distrust of the people. As a result, many innocent people are charged and imprisoned without trial...⁹

Hamka's struggle against Communism is also reflected in his commentary on the above two verses. In Hamka's own words:

It is a common practice for Communist authorities when they take control over a country to record the life-histories of famous people.... This is done for the purpose of destroying their characters by showing their weaknesses when needed.¹⁰

The interpretation of the above verses surprisingly take a political flavor. Hamka's antagonism toward the Sukarno regime is apparent again. It is also clear that for Hamka, Communism has always represented a bleak picture of society. Though Hamka may have to agree with some of

Communism's economic reforms, his differences with Communism are too great to be reconciled. Many Indonesians would readily concur with this view; the Communist inroads into state operations put an end to the Sukarno regime in 1962.

In the discussion of social justice, the second level emphasized by Hamka was the institution of the family. The conventions of propriety and privacy are essential for social justice. After guaranteeing the freedom of the individual, the Qur'ān then safeguards the privacy of family life. *Sūrat al-Nūr* (24): 27 asserts:

O ye who believe! enter not houses other than your own, until ye have asked permission and saluted those in them: that is best for you in order that ye may heed (what is seemly).

Hamka interpretes this verse in a straight forward manner, the verse shows that Qur'anic principles of asking respectful permission and exchanging salutations ensure privacy for the family without oppressive social isolation and undue familiarity. The home is the store of the secrets of family life, and any encroachment is violation of family freedom guaranteed by the Qur'ān.¹¹

On the societal level, Hamka emphasizes a just and responsible society. Responsible individuals will create a harmonious society; again, the role of the individual is paramount. Hamka quotes a famous tradition of the Prophet which urges every member of society to be accountable for what he or she is assigned:

Surely! Every one of you is a guardian and is responsible for his charges: The *Imām* (ruler) of the people is a guardian and is responsible for his subjects; a man is the guardian of his family (household) and is responsible for his subjects; a woman is the guardian of her husband's home and of his children and is responsible for them; and the slave of a man is a guardian of his master's property and responsible for it. Surely, every one of you is a guardian and responsible for his charges.¹²

Commenting on this tradition, Hamka suggests that this tradition elaborates the paradigm for achieving a just and egalitarian society. Each sector of society should be a partner not a competitor against the other. There is a place for all, rich and poor, old and young, and each member of society should be treated equally.¹³

To ensure the smooth running of society, a leader is required to assume social responsibility. In traditional Islamic society many terms were used to indicate leadership such as *Imām*, *Khalīfah*, *Sultān* and *Amīr*. Islamic leaders, according to Hamka, must be democratically elected from among the people. It is unreasonable for the people to expect a leader to be perfect "like an angel." Short comings and weaknesses are common for humankind.¹⁴ Hamka's position is somewhat accommodating; he was concerned with national unity and the preservation of Indonesia's freedom, just received from the Dutch colonial government. Muslims are required to obey their ruler whether they agree with him or not. This unswerving loyalty is due in so far as the ruler does not order his or her followers to commit an act of

disobedience (*ma'ṣiyah*) of the will of God.¹⁵ For example, in *Panji Masyarakat* Hamka attacks Sukarno's Guided Democracy and *Nasakom* for being detrimental to national unity. With those policies under the Sukarno regime only upper sectors of society benefit the most.¹⁶

The leaders are obliged to fulfil the *amānah* (trust) from God and ensure social justice for the people.¹⁷ In *Sūrat al-Nisā'* (4): 58 and 135 and in *Sūrat al-Aḥzāb* (33): 72, God reminds Muslims to practice '*adl* (justice) or *al-qist* (justice, moderation) in judgements. In 4: 58 we read:

Allah doth command you to render back your trusts to those to whom they are due; And when ye judge between people that ye judge with justice: Verily how excellent is the teaching which He giveth you! For Allah is He who heareth and seeth all things.

In the above verse, Muslims are commanded to restore the *amānahs* to those to whom they are due. Hamka reports that this verse was revealed on the day of the conquest of Makkah about 'Uthmān bin Ṭalhah, the keys-keeper of the *Ka'bah*. After the conquest of Makkah, instead of confiscating the keys, the Prophet returned them to 'Uthmān the inherited keys-keeper of the *Ka'bah*. Until now the keys are kept by the heir of 'Uthmān.¹⁸ Hamka opines that though this verse was revealed in a specific occasion, its application is wide and general. This means that certain jobs and responsibilities should be given to the most qualified person willing and able to do the job; they should not automatically be given to the one who asks for

it. A good person (*orang baik*) is not necessarily fit for certain responsibilities.¹⁹ Hamka quotes Abū Zar al-Ghiffārī as the prototype for this case. He was a pious, popular, and honest companion of the Prophet who lived a humble life but could not be trusted with the complex affairs of government administration. God has granted different persons with different potentials; one must recognize this and act accordingly.²⁰

After ensuring the right person for the right office, the Qur'ān then instructs Muslims to be just in their judgements. This leads us to *Sūrat al-Nisā'* (4): 135 which reads:

O ye who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor: For Allah can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest ye swerve, and if ye distort (justice) or decline to do justice, verily Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do.

This verse elaborates further God's instruction for establishing justice. Justice in Islam, Hamka claims, is higher than any other standard of justice since it searches out innermost motives: one acts in the presence of God to whom all motives are known. The implementation of justice must be done without bias, even if it is detrimental to one's own interests or the interests of those who are near to him or her. Hamka adds that justice must favor neither the helpless poor nor the rich in expectation of some

return. Impartiality in carrying out justice is essential. The ideal is to be just without fear or favor.²¹

Justice as elaborated in the above verse deals with individual behavior, and perhaps more importantly, the principle of national ideology by which law, order and social justice can be achieved.²² The egalitarian society depicted in this verse, according to Hamka, can be summarized in the famous speech of Abū Bakr upon accepting the appointment of *khalīfah*:

I have been given authority over you, [yet] I am not the best of you. If I do well, help me; and if I do wrong, set me right. Sincere regard for truth is loyalty, and disregard for truth is treachery. The weak amongst you shall be strong with me until I have secured his rights, if God will; and the strong amongst you shall be weak with me until I have wrested from him the rights of others, if God will. Obey me so long as I obey God and His Messenger. But if I disobey God and his messenger, [you] owe me no obedience...²³

It seems that the above discussion presents a sequential deliberation of responsibility in Islam. When the right person is in the right office, the Qur'ān then requires one to be just in one's judgements. Social justice does not come about by accident, rather it comes about from a responsible leader within an institutional framework. An appropriate person for a position can ensure justice in the area of his or her jurisdiction. Therefore, intervening in the affairs of things in which one has no expertise is injustice. In Hamka's words:

By preserving these two principles, *amānah* and 'adl-- peace, fairness, and social tranquility can be achieved. This is the situation in which the Prophet related that a woman can walk from Hirah (near Irāq) to Makkah without any trouble.²⁴

In summary the above ideal social condition is what Hamka aimed for when he engaged in the discourse of social justice. Though Indonesia is not an Islamic state, Hamka struggled continuously for a just Indonesian society. Hamka was not interested in Islamic names or slogans, but was concerned with the actual life of Indonesian. He was vocal about the issues in Indonesia. He expressed his ideas without favor or fear. This resulted in his detention by the Sukarno regime for over two years. Hamka's textual deliberations on social justice are practical and based on personal experiences. They do not, however, offer a concrete plan of action. It is possible that Hamka may just have been trying to create an awareness among the people, hoping that it will catch the attention of the government agencies.

Religious Unity of Humankind

In his Qur'anic commentary, Hamka frequently asserts the idea of the religious unity of humankind. He was a strong believer in religious unity as expounded by the Qur'ān. Hamka says:

The Human community in reality is one community. Likewise, religions in actuality are one, the *inti* (core) of religion is one. The contents of the messages of [all] Prophets have not changed though change took place in language. The *Shari'ah* (law)

and its way of application can be different because of the changes of time and space. Nonetheless, the *intisari* (essence) of the real intention of religion is only one, the recognition of the oneness of God.²⁵

This explanation reveals Hamka's devotion to the idea of religious harmony in Indonesia. We will further explore Hamka's view on different verses of the Qur'ān which reveal this point in a different context.

The discourse on religious unity centers around three Qur'anic terms, *islām* (submission), *ḥanīf* (the pure faith of Abraham) and *fiṭrah* (natural state). The following lines focus on relevant verses in order to explain Hamka's idea of religious unity in Indonesia. In this section we examine Hamka's struggle for religious unity, ultimately a struggle for Indonesian national unity.

The term *islām* is derived from the root word *salima* meaning "being safe and secured." One of its derivative is *silm* which means "peace or reconciliation." The word *islām* signifies self-resignation or submission. *Islām* also signifies the religion of Muslims because it is a religion of self-resignation or submission. A *Muslim* therefore is a person who is resigned or who submits himself to God. *Muslim* also means an adherent of the religion of Islam that was brought by the Prophet Muhammad.²⁶

The term *ḥanīf* is derived from the Arabic root word *ḥanafa* which means "to incline to one side or limp". *Ḥanīf* means "inclining to or having a right state or tendency,

particularly inclining from one religion to another." E.W. Lane in *Arabic-English Lexicon* quotes *Tāj al-'Arūz* by Sayyid al-Murtadā al-Zabīdī (d. 1205), the term refers to one who belongs to the religion of Abraham with respect to making the *Ka'bah* as his *qiblah*, and of the rite of circumcision. *Ḥanīfiyyah* also refers to "inclining towards a thing, that is the faith of Abraham which is the religion of *al-islām*."²⁷

The term *fiṭrah* originally comes from the Arabic root word *faṭara* which means "to split open or to create". *Fātir* means "creator or one who causes something to exist." *Fiṭrah* therefore means "creating or originating something for the first time." According to E.W. Lane the term refers to the natural constitution with which a child is created in his mother's womb. A tradition of the Prophet is cited to explain this term. The tradition reads:

Every infant is born in the state of conformity to the natural state with which he is created in his mother's womb. If his parents are Jewish then they make him Jewish; and if Christians, they make him Christian; and if Magians, they will make him Magian.²⁸

As it is understood by implication of this tradition, Muslim philologists suggest that the innate natural constitution of a person is capable of knowing God who has created humankind. By extension humankind is capable of accepting true religion, the religion of self-resignation and submission to God alone.²⁹ It is evident therefore that the meaning of those three terms intersect. They connote

recognition of the oneness of God and submission to His law, the message that was revealed to His messengers until the last messenger, Muhammad. This explanation is the basis for Hamka's subsequent discussion of the context of human religious unity.

The term *islām* in the Qur'ān is used in the wider sense of submission to God and the actual religion of Islam revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. For the first set of meanings the Qur'ān points persistently to a prefiguration of *islām* in the sense of the faith of Abraham which was believed in Arabia from ancient times as *hanīf* (the true faith), meaning the faith of submission to the one and only God. *Sūrat al-Rūm* (30): 30 reads:

So set thou thy face truly to the religion being upright, the nature in which Allah has made mankind: No change (there is) in the work (wrought) by Allah: that is the true Religion: But most among mankind know not.

This verse confirms that this faith is an immutable pattern according to which God has created humankind. Hamka argues that the true faith is imbedded in human nature. Humans in the state of *wujūd 'ilm* (existence in the knowledge of God) recognize the lordship of God.³⁰ Any person or ideology that does not recognize this is against the nature of the creation of humankind.³¹ Hamka relates the explanation of this verse to his own struggle against atheistic Communism in Indonesia. Therefore it may not be an

exaggeration to say that the commentary on this verse was directed toward atheistic Communist ideology.

This state of being is again depicted in *Sūrat al-'Arāf* (7): 172 which reads: "Am I not your Lord (who cherishes and sustains you)?" They say: "Yea! we do testify." Hamka concludes that any religion that does not recognize this true nature of faith, and proclaim God's absolute transcendence, is a corrupted form of religion.³²

The above idea is also supported by *Sūrat al-Baqarah* (2): 62 which reads:

Those who believe (in the Qur'ān). And those who follow the Jewish (scriptures), and the Christians and the Sabians³³, --Any who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.

Hamka considers this verse a universal promise from God to all human beings that they will be rewarded, regardless of their religious adherence, provided that they are sincere in their faith and perform righteous works.³⁴ This verse provides some common characteristics for salvation and consideration for universal faith. Among such characteristics are faith in one God and the hereafter and doing good deeds.³⁵

Considering this verse, one may wonder about the cultural and practical differences among religions. If one claims to believe in God, does one have to follow all religious practices, or is faith in God, and the hereafter,

and doing good deeds as required by the above verse the only additional requirements? All of these questions are complex yet significant in understanding this verse. These questions are not dealt with clearly by Hamka. Hamka seems to contradict his own argument when he asserts that, by implication, believing in God signifies believing in His revelation (revealed books) and messengers including the Prophet Muhammad.³⁶ This point however is a common view held by the modern commentators. This argument may be seen by other religious adherents as offensive. On the other hand, Hamka reiterates that this verse teaches "peaceful coexistence among all religious adherents"³⁷ despite ideological differences. They may be different yet they should respect each other. In other words, they should seek unity in diversity.

Hamka's commentary on this verse is well articulated, but Hamka takes many things for granted. For example, how can one address the missionary aspect of Islam and Christianity? Hamka's experience in Indonesia confirmed this difficulty. Religious fanaticism disrupts inter-religious harmony. Hamka was well aware of the Christian missionaries in Indonesia who were aggressive in preaching Christianity, sometimes disregarding the sensitivity of Muslims.³⁸ To ensure religious harmony in a multi-religious country like Indonesia, religious people are enjoined by the Qur'ān to uphold this universal principle. The differences in worship

in different religions are acceptable as long as their followers submit themselves to the will of God, and that is the real meaning of *islām*.³⁹

Hamka argues that the meaning and message of this verse are still valid, and therefore the verse has not been abrogated by a later verse. Some scholars in '*Ulūm al-Qur'ān* (the sciences of the Qur'ān) have argued that verse (2): 62 has been abrogated by (3): 85 which reads:

If anyone desires a religion other than Islam (submission to Allah) never will it be accepted of him; and in the hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who have lost.⁴⁰

Even though Qur'anic commentators still differ as to the meaning of the word "*islām*,"⁴¹ whether it refers to the religion of Islam or to the general concept of submission to God. According to Hamka even if one accepts the exclusive meaning of Islam, this verse still does not abrogate *al-Baqarah* (2): 62 but instead strengthens it. This is because the real meaning of Islam contains submission to God, faith in the hereafter, and the performance of good deeds. In other words, both inclusive and exclusive meanings of the *islām* possess the same qualities mentioned above.⁴²

This verse preaches inclusivity, not exclusivity. If this verse is understood in its exclusive meaning as the religion of Islam, Hamka says, the seed of fanaticism is sown. These two verses therefore complement each other. This will keep the meaning of Islam as the religion of *fiṭrah* which is compatible with all human souls. The coming of the

Prophet Muhammad was not to abrogate Judaism and Christianity, but rather to continue the universal message of submission to the one and only God. Differences of opinions among religious traditions are politically motivated and do not have much to do with the real message of religion.⁴³

Hamka also criticizes Muslims who bear the name but fall short in living the real meaning of Islam, just like the Jews and Christians who do not accept the oneness of God or submit to Him. Islamic religious practices, especially folk Islam are "dead motions" (*gerak-gerak yang mati*), meaningless if not coupled with the realization of God the most powerful and beneficent. The belief in and submission to God should be acted out in the reality of day-to-day life. The relationship between faith and action is that of *imān* (faith) and Islam.⁴⁴ Hamka says *Islam yang hidup* (dynamic Islam) can be relevant to the lives of all Indonesians. It is an opponent of the ritualistic practices of *adat* that only pay a lip service to Islam.⁴⁵

The *ḥanīf* religion and the state of human *fiṭrah* can shed further light on this matter. As we can observe from the following groups of verses, the term *ḥanīf* and its derivation, *fiṭrah*, and *islām* and their derivations denote the same meanings, the natural and true religion which is submission to only one God, the *ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm* (the straight path, 6: 79). This message has been revealed to

messengers of God at different points in time. *Sūrat Āl 'Imran* (3): 67 asserts that Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian but was true in faith, *hanīf*, a Muslim. *Sūrat al-Baqarah* (2): 135 and *Sūrat al-Nahl* (16): 120 declare that Abraham was true in faith, a *hanīf*, not a polytheist. *Sūrat al-Ḥajj* (22): 78 affirms to the believers, "...it is the religion of Your father Abraham. It is he who has named you (believers) Muslims..."

In 2: 128 Abraham and Ishmael pray to God to make their children submitters to God (Muslims). In 2: 133 the Prophet Jacob asks his children whom they will worship after his death; they replied: we will be Muslims to the one and only one God according to the teaching of our father Abraham. In *Sūrat Yūsuf* (12): 101 the Prophet Joseph prays to God to let him die as a Muslim and to place him among those He blessed. In *Sūrat al-An'ām* (6): 163 and in *Sūrat al-Zumar* (39):15 God commands the Prophet Muhammad to be and to declare himself the first Muslim.

As we can see from the above verses, these three terms are synonymous. The verses in 2: 135 and 136 somewhat explain the interconnectedness between *hanīf* and *islām*. verse 2: 135 reads:

They say: "Become Jews or Christians if ye would be guided (to salvation)." Say thou: "Nay! (I would rather) [follow] the religion of Abrāham the true, and he joined not gods with Allah."

Say ye: "We believe in Allah, and the revelation given to us, and to Abrāham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the tribes, and that given to Moses and Jesus, and that given to (all) Prophets from their Lord: We make no difference between one and another of them: and we submit to Allah" (2:136).

Hamka suggests, these verses explain the nature of Abrahamic faith, *ḥanīf*, the true submission to God alone and the nonassociation of anything with God. The verses in 2: 136 and *Sūrat Āl 'Imrān* (3): 84 further explain the religion of Abraham which was also revealed to other Prophets after him, to the Prophets Moses and Jesus, and to the other Prophets of God. All of them preach the same divine message, that is to become the submitter to God alone. God does not discriminate one Prophet over the other as He teaches them the monotheistic faith (*tawḥīd*). That is why the Qur'ān calls them all Muslims.⁴⁶ The same message is conveyed in 2: 131, 132, 133,⁴⁷ that is, all the progeny of Abraham believed in and submitted to God.⁴⁸ Therefore, it is clear from the above verses that all revealed religions affirm a common religious origin in the fatherhood of Abraham. From the Qur'anic point of view the general connotation of *islām* is a "just word" that holds together all religious adherents and makes an attempt to disregard the differences.

Along the same lines Hamka extends the Qur'anic call for unity in a concise verse of *Sūrat al-Mu'minūn* (23): 52 which reads: "And verily this Ummah of yours is a single Ummah and I am your Lord and cherisher: therefore fear Me." This verse signifies that all Prophets form one brotherhood,

their messages are one despite the differences in laws and their applications that change in time. They serve the same one true God and they owe their duty to Him and Him alone.⁴⁹ This universal message does not, however, disregard human differences, but rather calls for the affirmation of the very essence of every religion which is *tawḥīd Ilāhi* (unity of God) and *Ittiḥād Insānī* (human unity).⁵⁰

Hamka further argues that the claims of superiority of one religion over another, or one ethnic group over another are therefore denigrated into irrelevancy. The only valid claim is the assertion of one's servitude to one God. Hamka was saddened with the religious disparity among the Muslims. The conflict of *madhhab* over non-principal (*furū'*) issues caused Indonesian Muslims to dissociate from one another. This was the case because of *taqlīd* minded followers for whom Islam is reduced to the principles of *ḥalāl* and *ḥarām* lawful and unlawful things and actions only.⁵¹ It is not surprising to note that Hamka was concerned with such issues as he was one of the religious reformers in twentieth century Indonesia who did not hesitate to give constructive criticism for the betterment of Indonesian society.

Hamka's position in this case echoed the belief of many Muslim scholars. The interconnections of the meanings of those Qur'anic terms may be the reason that al-Farūqī designated them as the methodology for inter-religious dialogue. Al-Farūqī proposes that *dīn al-fiṭrah*, or *religio*

naturalis, to be the goal for which all religions should strive.⁵² Along with a natural discerning faculty, human beings are created in perfect form into which God breathed His spirit.⁵³ Humankind, with this innate nature, is alone capable of achieving the highest righteousness, the knowledge of God. This very nature entitles him to membership in the universal brotherhood under God. The adherents of world religions are hence members of one family, and their religious differences are domestic, in reference to a common origin in *dīn al-fiṭrah*.⁵⁴ Therefore, instead of seeking to know how far all religious traditions agree with one another, al-Farūqī proposes that we should be concerned with how far these religious traditions agree with *dīn al-fiṭrah*. Since all religious traditions according to al-Farūqī are a historical outgrowth of natural religion, the process of getting to the core of each religious tradition is actually the sharing of experience and expertise which determine the real inter-religious dialogue.⁵⁵

Theoretically, this concept appears to be sound and well-documented. But practically, it is difficult to carry out. Effort and determination are needed to eliminate historical outgrowths of religious traditions. A religious tradition should engage in self-reflection and measure itself against *dīn al-fiṭrah*. However, from another perspective it is risky business because the historical and

cultural outgrowths of a religious tradition are part and parcel of it. To eliminate human outgrowth in religion is to deny the vitality of human religious experience. Moreover, if religion does not address human need, one wonders what is the purpose of religion. In other words, to apply this ideal principle to religious traditions is to impose Muslim perceptions of religion which defeat the purpose of interreligious dialogue.

Educational Reform

Education is one of the primary concerns of Hamka in determining the identity of Indonesia. In this section we will examine Hamka's ideas for educational reform and his efforts to achieve this objective. Hamka was involved in the process of education in Indonesia on various levels, from educational institutions and public education to speeches and public lectures. Therefore, Hamka's views on education, especially religious education, should be reckoned with.

In the course of our discussion of mysticism, we discussed Hamka's effort to reform mysticism. In an inaugural lecture at the Religious Teacher Training College in Yogyakarta in 1958, Hamka delved into the subject of reform in mysticism. The *Mengembalikan Tasauf ke Pangkalnya* (Returning Mysticism to Its Origin) is evidence of his efforts. However, in the present discussion we will focus on

Hamka's thoughts on religious education based primarily on *Sūrat Luqmān* (31): 13-19⁵⁶ and *Sūrat al-Tawbah* (9): 122.⁵⁷

Hamka considers *Sūrat Luqmān* as having educational principles that should be explored. It contains the moral advice of Luqmān (the wise), who was given the *ḥikmah* (wisdom) by God, to his son. Luqmān was a Qur'anic prototype figure to whom God gave guidance. These verses record the ethical code for conduct which Luqmān gave as a *waṣiyyah* (testament) to his son. Hamka regards these principles to be basic to the science of education.⁵⁸ There are at least seven principles that can be delineated. First, as contained in 31: 13, Luqmān advises his son to hold on to *tawḥīd*, to recognize the oneness of God and not associate any other gods with Him. The principle of *tawḥīd* should be established as the foundation of Muslim philosophy of life, and guide to all actions.⁵⁹

Secondly, the two following verses (14-15) enjoin respect and honor of parents, even if they are unbelievers. All human beings are indebted to parents as the cause of their existence. The Qur'ān, in this regard, acknowledges the difficulties and sacrifices of the parents in nurturing a child. The mother in particular is commented in the Qur'ān and prophetic tradition for the hardships of child-bearing and nursing. Hamka quotes a tradition of the Prophet where he was asked:

"O Messenger of God, Who is more entitled to be treated with the best companionship by me?" The

Prophet said, "Your mother." The man asked further, "then who?" The Prophet said, "Your mother." The man further asked "then who?" The Prophet said, "Your mother," The man asked for the forth time, "Who is next?" The Prophet said, "Your father."⁶⁰

This tradition teaches that if love and respect for parents were to be divided into four parts, three parts would belong to the mother. A parent-child relationship is unconditional, regardless of belief or ideological difference, as far as they have mutual respect of each other's faith. This is because human interaction in Islam is based on the commandment of God. The only disobedience to parents or human authority allowed is in situations in which the will of God is violated. In other words, the act of obedience is considered a good deed in so far as the religious principles of the son or daughter are not violated.⁶¹

The third principle enjoined in these verses is accountability of all actions. In 31: 16 Luqmān exhorts his son on the principle of accountability. This is symbolized by the mustard-seed hidden beneath a rock or in the cleft of a rock, or lost in the spacious expanse of the earth or the heaven, which God brings forth and takes account of in the hereafter. This message, Hamka advocates, is a place of spiritual refuge as some of one's good deeds may not be recognized by fellow human beings. But God ensures that He takes note of everything.⁶² Muslims should be more accountable for their actions and more responsible in

fulfilling their duties, no matter how small or insignificant they may be. Without even the smallest part of the puzzle, the whole picture is incomplete.

Forthly, in 31: 17, Luqmān enjoins his son to establish regular prayers (*ṣalāh*). For, prayer is a vertical relationship between Muslims and God, direct and unmediated.⁶³

Fifthly, in the same verse, Luqmān urges his son to enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil. This principle, according to Hamka, should be the bases for societal life, representing a horizontal relationship between Muslims and their fellow human beings. It is a universal message that has to be carried out by Muslims to all people regardless of ideological inclination.⁶⁴

Sixthly, in 31: 18, Luqmān provides an individual code of ethics in human interaction against arrogance. In verbal communication, for instance, turning away one's face is an act of disrespect. So also is walking arrogantly. This reprehensible behavior, according to Hamka, is the result of arrogant self-conceit intended to cover up one's own weaknesses.⁶⁵

The seventh principle enjoined in these verses is the "golden mean" or moderation in all aspects of life (31: 19). This golden mean is pivotal to Luqmān's philosophy and to Islam. As this verse recommends, one must be moderate in one pace, and lower one voice and must not be stationary or

slow. One must not be talkative and must not be silent. Loudness, timidity and half-heartedness are objectionable. One must neither be too confident nor cowed down. These "means" are accomplished with determination, constancy and humility.

Hamka concludes that these seven principles constitute the philosophical foundation for the educational system of Muslims. *Tawhīd* breeds *jiwa merdeka* (independent self), a character which is not bound to material or worldly influence. The harmonious family will guarantee a peaceful society.⁶⁶ The exhortations of Luqmān to his son also lay down the "golden mean" for human interaction.

The need for a special emphasis on religious education is found in *Sūrat al-Tawbah* (9): 122. Hamka advocates that the verse stresses that religious education must be carried out even during times of war. During the time of the Prophet when the call for war was made, Hamka argues Muslims answered the call. But in this verse fighting is not to be glorified to the exclusion of other aspects of life. Even for those who are able to go forth and answer the call, the advice is to stay behind for the purpose of studying religion. Hamka further recommends that under the guidance of properly instructed teachers, the fighters' minds upon returning home may be attuned again to normal religious life. The teachers and students should be soldiers of *jihād* in their struggle for knowledge.⁶⁷

Hamka adds, the spirit of this verse was reflected in the reign of the four rightly guided Caliphs who, though learned themselves, sought the religious advice of other learned companions of the Prophet for their decision-making.⁶⁸ Hamka deplores that the relations between 'ulamā' and political leaders are not always cordial. These differences often result in the imprisonment of the 'ulamā'. Hamka knew this all too well.⁶⁹

Hamka's description of these verses is in many ways directed toward Indonesian secular education which was either supervised by, or inherited from the Dutch colonial government. It was a program for acculturation of Indonesians. The Dutch educational program was one approach to ruling Indonesia, under the general slogan of "ethical politics."⁷⁰ This kind of education Hamka lamented, was aimed at driving the Muslims away from Islam, a tradition with which Dutch authorities could not deal. The system created culturally and religiously ambivalent Muslims--by birth Muslims but educationally and culturally compromised by Dutch education.⁷¹

Learning from this experience, Hamka opines that Indonesians must not overlook their own indigenous Islamic system that emphasizes physical as well as spiritual developments. On the other hand, one should not copy traditional Muslims, who are traditionally educated and concerned with ritualistic, ceremonials and legalistic

Islam. These Muslims labelled those Muslims who were different from them as *sesat* (astray) or *kufur* (unbelievers). Even more dramatic was the reaction of the traditionally educated Muslims toward the reformed educational system, which gave equal emphasis to secular (academic) and religious educations. An example is the Muhammadiyah system of education. That is why the Muhammadiyah were accused of being *kaum muda, sesat*, or even *mengubah-ngubah agama* (altering religion).⁷²

However, the Dutch school system was not a complete success story. It is true that the Dutch Native School in twentieth century Indonesia brought a better acquaintance with the Dutch language, which resulted in a softening of Indonesian attitudes toward Dutch culture. On the other hand, the system produced adverse effects for the Dutch authorities. The Dutch-educated Indonesians were made more aware of Dutch policy and its manipulation of Islam. Haji Agus Salim and Muhammad Natsir are examples; they emphasized the counter-productive nature of the Dutch educational system.⁷³

The Islamic and intellectual defenses of Agus Salim and Muhammad Natsir against the Christian propaganda of Hendrick Kraemer and Father J.J. ten Berge respectively, were the products of Dutch education.⁷⁴ They did not come from traditionally educated '*ulamā*'. The familiarity with the Dutch educational system was partly responsible for the

emergence of a reformed Islamic system of education. Of course, it was intensified further by the rise of the Islamic reform movements in Indonesia, pioneered by the followers of the Egyptian Muhammad 'Abduh. This movement pleaded for a return to the original teachings of the Qur'ān and the tradition of the Prophet which would transcend is that what you mean the later accretions of history.⁷⁵

The task of educational reform, Hamka asserts, must be borne by all sectors of society: government, Islamic social organizations and the individual Muslim preacher. In his commentary Hamka elaborates this point in a general way. One of the verses that is normally considered to be the backbone for the methodology of religious preaching is *Sūrat al-Naḥl* (16): 125 which reads:

Invite (all) to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching: and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: for thy Lord knoweth best, who have strayed from His path, and who receive guidance.

This verse exhibits the principles of *da'wah* (religious preaching) which God has demonstrated to the Prophet, the prime preacher of Islam. Three principles of *da'wah* can be discerned from the above verse, first, *ḥikmah* (wisdom) and discretion, conveying the message wisely, with good behavior and honorably. *Ḥikmah* according to Hamka is not a philosophical concept but rather behavioral principle which guides the Muslim preacher to speak on the level of the listener. The way of *ḥikmah* should allow one to be "able to

make things comprehensible for the common people and irrefutable for the intellectual."⁷⁶ It is not always words that are considered wise; keeping silent at certain times is more wise than speaking. Therefore one must know when and what to speak because the effectiveness of words is very much dependent on the way they are spoken and to whom they are addressed.

Second is *al-maw' izah al-ḥasanah* (good counsel or exhortation). One's manner must not be acrimonious, but courteous and a gracious example, so that the hearer may be convinced and not offended. This principle according to Hamka is nurtured at home by parental upbringing and is acquired by training.⁷⁷

Third, arguments must be made in ways that are best and most gracious. In this dialogical situation the preacher should not have personal hatred, but present the argument in the most gracious way.⁷⁸ These three principles must be upheld by all Muslim educators. Education should be an objective undertaking, not a propaganda tool by which one tries to force his own ideas on the listener. Islamic education should therefore nurture, and not repel people with harsh and judgmental arguments. Looking at Hamka's life, it can be said that he tried to educate and nurture the Indonesian society by means of religious writings and public preachings. Hamka's life and works are a clear testimony to this fact.

Concluding Remarks

As a continuation of the previous chapter, this chapter further concretizes our thesis that *Tafsīr al-Azhar* reflected social condition of Indonesian society. Social change in Indonesia can be seen reflected in the pages of *Tafsīr al-Azhar*. There are in fact many points of reference between the two.

The three issues we dealt with in this chapter, namely interreligious unity, social justice and educational reform, are pertinent to the kind of national identity that Hamka envisaged for Indonesia. Because Indonesia is a multi-religious society, Hamka proposed religious unity. Yet Hamka was a man of his own environment; all his ideas were under the shade of an Islamic umbrella. Though he attempted to tackle some national issues, his approach was Islamic in nature. Religious unity, for instance, was a well articulated proposal, but in practice it was seen as being essentially against non-Muslims.

The principles of religious education and social justice which Hamka strove to implement are not much different from his ideas about religious unity. These ideas were Islamic and were often times acceptable only to some Muslims. In his explication of the above issues Hamka painted an Islamic picture, exhibiting his belief in the universalism of Islam. Hamka's Islam is Islam in the real sense, in which submission to God is placed above everything

else. Perhaps for interreligious harmony in Indonesia, the study of religions needs to be a priority of the national agenda. Perhaps Indonesians knowledgeable about their neighbors' religions will cultivate more tolerance and reciprocal respect.

ENDNOTES

1. Hamka, *Islam: Revolusi Ideologi dan Keadilan Sosial*, ed. by Rusydi Hamka (Jakarta: Pustaka Panjimas), 1984, pp. v, vi.

2. The term *khalīfah* and its derivation appear in many places (6:165; 10:14, 73; 35:39; 7:69, 74; 27:62.) in the Qur'ān, including *Sūrat al-Baqarah* (2): 30 which reads:

Behold, thy Lord said to the angels "I will create a vicegerent on earth." They said: "Wilt Thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood?--while we do celebrate Thy praises and glorify Thy holy (name)?" He said: "I know what ye know not."

3. Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, vol. 9, p. 6835.

4. The term *sayyid* is a title normally considered for a descendent of the Prophet especially through the line of Husayn, the grandson of the Prophet.

5 See Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, vol. 9, 6828-29.

6. Ibid., p. 6833.

7. Hamka, *Keadilan Sosial Dalam Islam* (Djakarta: Widjaya, 1951), p. 6.

8. Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, vol. 9, p. 6833.

9. Ibid., p. 6832.

10. Ibid., p. 6833.

11. Ibid., vol. 7, p. 4917.

12. Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī*, translated by Muhammad Muhsin Khan, vol. 9, chapter on *aḥkām* (rulings) ḥadīth no. 252, p. 189.

13. Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, vol. 7, p. 4918.

14. Hamka, *Keadilan Sosial*, p. 9. There are many traditions of the Prophet that emphasize the responsibilities of a leader and his right from the people. This important topic was addressed by the Prophet during his life. In the classical collections of traditions of the Prophet we find special topics assigned for these types of traditions. For example in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* they were placed under the chapter of *Imārah*; in Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, they can be found under the chapter of *Aḥkām*.
15. Hamka, *Keadilan Sosial*, p. 9.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
18. Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, vol. 2, p. 1269. For a detailed discussion of the occasion of revelation of this verse see, vol. 2, pp. 1265-69.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 1269-70, 72.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 1273.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 1467.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 1468.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 1273. The English translation is quoted, with some modifications, from A. Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Iṣḥāq's Sīrat Rasūl Allah*, with introduction and notes by A. Guillaume (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 687. See also Martin Lings, *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources* (London: The Islamic Society, 1983), p. 344.
24. Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, vol. 2, p. 1275.
25. *Ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 4800.
26. See E.W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1984), pp. 1412, 1414.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 658.
28. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 2415-16
29. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 2416.
30. Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, vol. 7, p. 5516.

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid.

33. The reference to the Sabaeans in this verse has been the subject of much controversy among the classical Qur'anic commentators. Some say that they are a group of star worshipers, yet they profess the existence of the Creator and the last day, and they accept some of the prophets of God. Some Qur'anic exegetes are of the view that they are a sect of People of the Book who recite the Psalms. Yet others are of the opinion that they are people who adhere to a religion similar to that of the Christians, except that they face south for prayer when the sun is at its meridian. They also claim to follow the faith of the Prophet Noah. See Mahmoud Ayoub, *The Qur'ān and Its Interpreters*, vol. 1, p. 109; cf Yusof Ali, *The Holy Qur'ān*, note 76, p. 27.

34. Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, vol. 1, p. 203.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid, p. 205.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid., p. 206.

39. Ibid., p. 208. See also Hamka's interpretations of 2: 112, vol. 1, pp. 268-69.

40. Whatever the case may be, the argument against the idea of abrogation of 2:62 by 3:85 would be that the verse 2:62 was revealed again in 5:69 which was very much latter than verse in 3: 85. The verse 5:69 therefore reinforced the message in 2:62.

41. For a general discussion of the interpretation of the term *islām* by *tafsīr* masters see Jane I. Smith, *An Historical and Semantic Study of the Term "Islam" as Seen in a Sequence of Qur'ān Commentaries*, ed. by Caroline Bynum and George Rupp, Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1975. See also Mahmoud Ayoub, *The Qur'an and Its Interpreters*, vol. 2, pp. 241-43.

42. Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, vol. 1, p. 208.

43. Ibid., p. 210.

44. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 207; see also vol. 2, pp. 733; 828-29.

45. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 207.

46. Ibid., pp. 312-14; vol. 2, p. 827.

47. The verses under discussion read:

Behold! his Lord said to him: "Submit (thy will to Me):" he said, "I submit (my will) to the Lord and Cherisher of the Universe (2: 131); And Abraham enjoined upon his sons and so did Jacob; "O my sons! Allah hath chosen the faith for you; then die not except in the state of submission (to me) (2: 132); Were ye witnesses when death appeared before Jacob? Behold, he said to his sons: "What will ye worship after me?" They said: "We shall worship thy God and the God of thy fathers, of Abraham, Ismā'īl, and Isaac,--the one (true) God; To Him we do submit." (2: 133)

48. See Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, vol. 1, pp. 306-10.

49. Ibid. vol. 6, p. 4800; vol. 2, p. 733.

50. Ibid., vol. 6, p. 4801.

51. Ibid., p. 4802.

52. Ismā'īl Rāgī al-Farūqī, "Islam and Other Faiths, the World's Need for Humane Universalism" in Altaf Gauhar, ed. *The Challenge of Islam* (London: Islamic Council of Europe, 1978), p. 92.

53. See *Sūrat al-Sajdah* (32): 9 which declares:

But He fashioned him in due proportion, and breathed into him of His spirit. And gave you (the faculties of) hearing and sight and understanding little thanks do ye give!

54. Al-Farūqī, "Islam and Other Faiths," p. 93.

55. Ibid., p. 94.

56. The verses under discussion read:

Behold, Luqmān said to his son admonishing him "O my son! Join not in worship [of] (others) with Allah: for False worship is indeed the highest wrong-doing" (31:13); And We have enjoined on man (to be good) to his parents: In travail upon travail did his mother bear him. And in years twain was his weaning: (hear to command), "Show gratitude to Me and to thy parents: To Me is (thy

final) Goal" (31:14); But if they strive to make thee join in worship with Me things of which thou hast no knowledge, obey them not; yet bear them company in this life with justice (and consideration), and follow the way of those who turn to Me: in the End the return of you all is to Me, and I will tell you all that ye did (31:15); "O my son!" (said Luqmān), "If there be (but) the weight of a mustard-seed and it were (hidden) in a rock, or (anywhere) in the heavens or on earth, Allah will bring it forth: for Allah is subtle and aware." (31: 16); "O my son! establish regular prayer, enjoin what is just, and forbid what is wrong: and bear with patient constancy whatever betide thee; for this is firmness (of purpose) in (the conduct of) affairs." (31: 17); "And swell not thy cheek (for pride) at men. Nor walk in insolence through the earth: for Allah loveth not any arrogant boaster." (31: 18); "And be moderate in thy pace, and lower thy voice; for the harshest of sounds without doubt is the braying of the ass." (31: 19);

57. 9: 122:

It is not for the believers to go forth together: if a contingent from every expedition go forth to devote themselves to studies in religion, and admonish the people when they return to them, that thus they (may learn) to guard themselves (against evil).

58. Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, vol. 7, p. 5553.

59. Ibid., p. 5566.

60. Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī*, trans., by Muhammad Muhsin Khan, vol. 8, Chapter on *ādāb* (good manners), ḥadīth no. 2, p. 2 (with some modifications). See also Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, vol. 7, p. 5567.

61. Hamka, *Tafsir al-Azhar*, vol. 7, pp. 5568-69.

62. Ibid., p. 5569.

63. Ibid., p. 5571.

64. Ibid., p. 5571. See also vol. 2, pp. 865-871; For a detailed elaboration of *da'wah* (Islamic preaching) and the requirements of *dā'ī* (Muslim preacher), see Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, vol. 2, pp. 872-77.

65. Ibid., vol. 7, p. 5572.
66. Ibid., p. 5573.
67. Ibid., vol. 4, p. 3167.
68. Ibid., p. 3168.
69. Ibid., p. 3170.
70. The term "ethical politics" connotes a complex ideology that claims to have covered, as Steenbrink writes,

...a policy guardianship followed by a policy of emancipation, a welfare policy for the benefit of the Indonesian population, a policy of association, a policy of safeguarding the interests of Dutch exports. (*Dutch Colonialism and Indonesian Islam*, pp. 85.)

In other words, it is one of the tools designed to control the Indonesian people. The tone of the policy depicted as a "moral vocation;" the purpose was imperialism. See Steenbrink, *Dutch Colonialism and Indonesian Islam*, pp. 85, 92, 96. For a detailed outline of the origin and definition, see the pamphlet from 1901 by Brooshooft, *De ethische koers in de koloniale politiek* (The Ethical Direction in Colonial Politics), pp. 11-54.
71. Hamka, *Pelajaran Agama Islam*, p. 366.
72. Ibid., p. 367.
73. Steenbrink, *Dutch Colonialism and Indonesian Islam*, pp. 133-34.
74. As for the polemical correspondence between Dutch Christian missionaries and Indonesian Muslim scholars, see Steenbrink, *Dutch Colonialism and Indonesian Islam*, pp. 111-13; 118-21.
75. Ibid., p. 134.
76. Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, vol. 5, p. 3989.
77. Ibid.
78. Ibid.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

In contemporary studies of modern Islamic thought in Indonesia Hamka is regarded as one of the most important modern Islamic thinkers. Despite the fact that Hamka had a limited formal education, his love for knowledge drove him to be an outstanding modern 'ulamā'. Hamka started writing at the early age of seventeen. His writings flourished during and immediately after the period of the Indonesian Revolution. Hamka's Islamic ideas were expressed through various media: novels, journalistic writings, speeches, and of course, religious works. Among his works, however, *Tafsīr al-Azhar* is the most outstanding work, as it manifests his knowledge of Islamic sciences.

Many studies on Hamka's Islamic thought have been conducted. His novels are studied as popular expressions of his religiosity. Mysticism is another area that has been investigated by scholars to identify Hamka's efforts to correct what he considered to be its errors. Hamka's theological ideas have also been studied in his *Tafsīr al-Azhar*. But the role of his *tafsīr* as a mirror of social change in Indonesia has never been adequately examined and analyzed.

The present study has attempted to interpret and locate Hamka's *tafsīr* in the genre of Qur'anic commentary in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago. The primary aim has been, however, to understand fully the connection of *Tafsīr al-Azhar* with Indonesian social change. Throughout the history of writing *tafsīr* in the Muslim world, *tafsīr* literature has reflected in one way or another contemporary intellectual, social and political climates. This study has aimed at a comprehensive analysis of the issues pertinent during that time in light of Hamka's interpretation of the Qur'ān.

The study reveals several significant facts which have not been investigated before. These may be summarized as follows:

The Malay-Indonesian world's contact with the Qur'ān is widely underestimated. A study of foreign word in the Qur'ān revealed that the word *kāfūr* in *Sūrat al-Insān* (76): 5-6¹ is not an Arabic root word *k.f.r* (ungrateful), but originated from the word *kapur* (camphor) which has been one of the most precious products for trade between the Arab world and the Malay-Indonesian archipelago since the seventh century.² Therefore, it can be argued that the word *kāfūr* is a loan word from Malay language. In *Sejarah Melayu* it is recorded that among the earliest conversions was that of the headman of Samudra who was taught the Qur'ān by the Muslim preacher, *fakīr*, after his conversion.³

Second, the writing of Qur'anic commentary in the Malay-Indonesian world started before its official beginning with 'Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Sinkilī in the seventeenth century. The study of manuscript MS li. 6.45 reveals that Qur'anic commentary was written in the sixteenth century during the golden age of Malay-Indonesian Islamic literature production and thus predates 'Abd al-Ra'ūf's *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd*.

Third, the present study has also found that Qur'anic commentaries in the Malay-Indonesian world depended closely on the parent *tafsīrs* of the Middle East in their methodology and contents. The modern *tafsīrs* which were partly popularized by Muḥammad 'Abduh served as models for the twentieth century *tafsīrs* in the Malay-Indonesian world in which rationalism and responses to western colonialism which brought along Christian missionaries, science and technology were the main thrusts. Hamka was the prime representative of this type of *tafsīr*. As a matter of fact, Hamka's *tafsīr* is unique as he makes use of indigenous stories and experiences to enrich understanding of the Qur'ān and better relate it to the Malay-Indonesian-speaking Muslims.

Fourth, the study of Hamka's life and works, specifically *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, reveals that Hamka's interpretation of the Qur'ān was influenced by contemporary Indonesian intellectual, social and political phenomena. Hamka's interpretation is inspired by his reform mentality

and the post-independent Indonesian national agenda, that is, a conscious effort toward the recovery of an authentic national identity.

Fifth, at the time of the *tafsīr*'s writing, Indonesia was in the midst of identity crisis. Indonesian scholars from various intellectual backgrounds tried to leave their mark on independent Indonesia. By doing so, Hamka contributed to Indonesian Islamic legacy at least in two important ways: he contextualized various meanings of the Qur'an by means of concrete local experience, in order to better relate the verses to the people. By so doing, he reconstructed local life-experience as a new reality based on the text of the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet. Borrowing Ghazālī's "revival of religious sciences," the synthesis of Islamic intellectual and religious thought, Hamka was in the same position when he tried to synthesize the triangle of theology, mysticism and philosophy in the context of Indonesian society. Thus he established bridges between traditionalists and modernists as well as legalists and spiritually minded Muslims. He also attempted to relate doctrinal ideas of Islam with the cultural life of the people. In other words, he tried to transform a rigid understanding of Islam into a lively, dynamic approach, relevant to societal life in Indonesia.

Sixth, the study has also found that *Tafsīr al-Azhar* uses a thematic approach, as it discusses the verses in the

context of thematic meaning. A thorough study of Hamka's *tafsīr* reveals Hamka's thorough knowledge of jurisprudence (*fiqh*), theology (*kalām*), mysticism, modern science, history, and local proverbs and sayings. On many occasions Hamka overstretches the meanings of the verses of the Qur'ān beyond their apparent meanings. In short, *Tafsīr al-Azhar* contains all Islamic sciences including the commentaries on the Qur'ān.

Seventh, and more significant, is the fact that in the age of modern cultural assimilation (*percaturan kebudayaan*), Hamka was able to *membumikan dan mempribumikan* (terrestrialize and indigenize) Islam in Indonesia. This was done by interpreting Islamic teachings by means of concrete local life-experience. In other words, Hamka was able to contextualize Islam to a point where Islam was easily understood and accepted by Indonesian society. With that approach Hamka contributed a great deal to providing a new structure of Islamic understanding by means of day-today experience. This experience, together with his skill in the language of the common people, allowed him to present Islam in a practical and lively manner.

Hamka as one of the Muslim reformers in Indonesian society saw human beings as dynamic creatures, not as fatalistic ones. Human beings should not submit to a situation without trying to change it for the betterment of their own lives. This position also implies his struggle

against *taqlīd* as opposed to *kemerdekaan berfikir* (freedom of thought) and deviant mysticism. But above all, Hamka places these ideals in a proper perspective that must be guided by revelation. Revelation will guide reason to another level of reality, that is, the realization of the oneness of God. Hamka took this reform position because of his unpleasant experience with traditional Islam.

This modest study is by no means the last word on Hamka or his Qur'an commentary. It is hoped that it will open a new horizon for further research. The present study therefore suggests that an inquiry into the subject of the relationship between the modern Malay-Indonesian literatures and the contemporary social setting is rewarding and significant, especially in terms of knowledge of the contemporary religious or cultural expression. It is therefore important that further inquiries into the subject be carried out. This is especially true in view of the current interest in religion as a factor in the overall post-colonial quest for identity in the Malay-Indonesian countries.

It should be interesting to examine in future research major influences on Hamka's thought in specific areas of Islamic sciences. Further study of this subject may be conducted by focussing on individual Muslim thinkers like Ibn Taymiyyah, Muhammad 'Abduh or any other scholars. An

examination of this relationship should be a rewarding study.

Since the present study has tangentially pointed out 'Abduh's influence on many Southeast Asian *tafsīrs*, it is also necessary that a comparative and exhaustive study be carried out in order to establish in a definitive manner the extent of 'Abduh's influence on Hamka's *tafsīr*.

ENDNOTES

1. The verse under discussion reads:

As to the Righteous, they shall drink of a cup
mixed with *Kāfūr*, a fountain where the devotees of
Allah do drink, making it flow in unstinted
abundance.

2. The word *kāfūr* in the Malay-Indonesian archipelago refers to a white substance derived from a kind of wood found in the jungle of Sumatra Island. It is known also as *Kapūr Bārus* and indicates an area in which it is found abundantly. Hamzah Fansūrī refers to *Bārus* as the place where he came from. See Hamka, *Tafsīr al-Azhar*, vol. 10, pp. 7790-91. See also K. Steenbrink, "Qur'ān Interpretation of Hamzah Fansūrī and Hamka," p. 77.

3. See C.C. Brown, *Sejarah Melayu or Malay Annals* (Kuala Lumpur: OUP, 1970), pp. 32-33.

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